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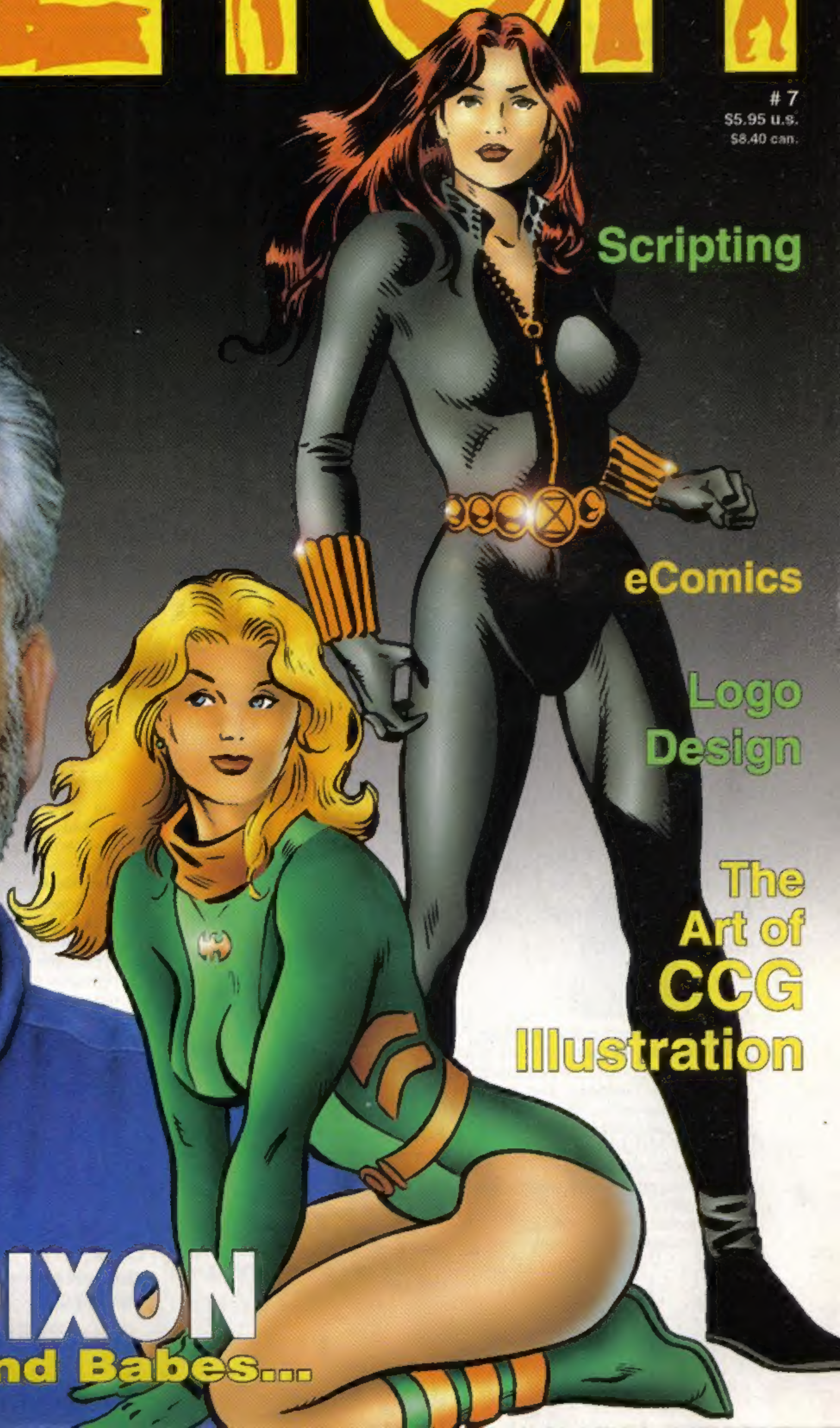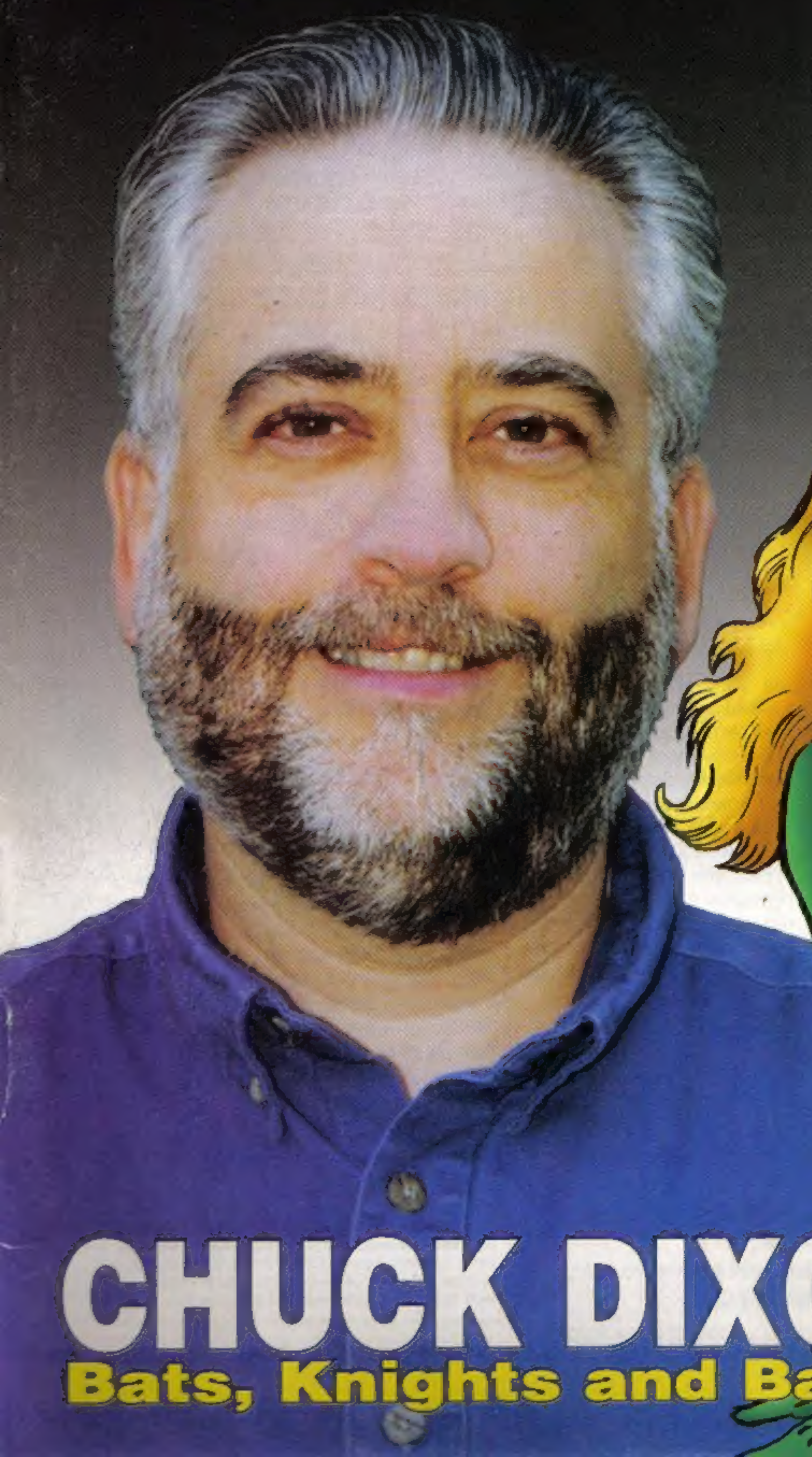
SKETCH

Better
Designed Comics

Scripting

eComics

Logo
Design

The
Art of
CCG
Illustration

CHUCK DIXON
Bats, Knights and Babes...

Along with his duties with Sketch Magazine, **Bob Hickey** has been the creative force behind Blood & Roses, StormQuest and Tempered Steele. He oversees production work at Sacred Studios which is currently packaging Parts Unknown for Image Comics and has a new Blood and Roses series in the works along with his new creator owned series Race Danger.

Bob is one of the co-founders of Blue Line Productions.
www.bluelinepro.com
www.sacredstudios.com
www.racedanger.com

Flint Henry's comic career began in the waning days of the independent market of the '80's, where his frenetic and violent style enjoyed a popular run on the fondly remembered Grimjack at First Comics. Over the years to follow, some personal favorites include Lawdog; a creator owned character done with longtime friend Chuck Dixon from Marvel/Epic, as well as numerous Batman related projects from DC. He's also produced a variety of comic product for Todd Toys (now McFarlane Toys), Image, SQP Inc, and Chaos!, as well as Eclipse, Dark Horse, Palladium, and others.

Tom Bierbaum, with wife Mary, has scripted such comics as Legion of Super-Heroes and The Heckler for DC Comics, Xena and Return to Jurassic Park for Topps Comics, Star for Image Comics and Dead Kid Adventures, a creator owned project by Knight Press.

Paul Sizer teaches graphic design at Western Michigan University, runs his own freelance design and illustration business, and in his spare time writes, illustrates and designs his comic book LITTLE WHITE MOUSE, published by Caliber Comics.
Paul lives and works in Kalamazoo, Michigan.
See more of Pauls work at:
www.littlewhitemouse.com.

Beau Smith created and writes Parts Unknown currently at Image Comics, writer of The Undertaker for Chaos Comics, The Tenth, Wynonna Earp, Spawn: Book Of Souls , Wolverine/Shi, Batman/Wildcat and the upcoming cross over-Xena/Wonder Woman and several Star Wars stories for Dark Horse.
www.sacredstudios.com/partsunknown

Clint McElroy has worked in the media for over 25 years. He is currently working as the top-rated afternoon disc jockey at the number one radio station in his market. He has worked for the CBS radio network, covering the Tampa Bay Buccaneers for Brent Musberger's "Monday Night Football" radio broadcasts. He has hosted television programs ranging from real-estate shows to late-night monster movies....and has even moderated the gubernatorial debates for the state of West Virginia. He has made over a hundred appearances on local television news broadcasts over the last 25 years. He has written for the "Comics Buyers Guide" and is currently the writer of a regular column in "Huntington Quarterly Magazine".
He also knows the world of comics. A collector his entire life, Clint (along with Beau Smith) co-wrote and co-produced the popular "Comicast" audio fanzine in the 1990's. He worked as host and contributor on the "Comics Vision" video series. Clint has written titles like "Green Hornet" and "Illegal Aliens", and created the mini-series "Blood is the Harvest" for Eclipse and the very successful "Green Hornet: Dark Tomorrow" mini-series for Now. He also did the movie adaptations for films including "Freejack", "Universal Soldier", and "The Three Ninjas".

Freelance writer **Scott Beatty** has been a magazine editor, college English instructor, and beloved radio personality, but nothing gives him more pleasure than sitting at home and puzzling over just how many K's Jack Kirby would have used for a suitably impressive "KRAKKA-KOOM!"

Joe Corroney is the instructor for Comic Book-Cartoon Illustration Class and Electronic Illustration Class at the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio. He has illustrated for a variety of comic book publishers including Dead-Kid for Knight Press, Blood and Roses for Sacred Studios, Green Lantern for DC Comics, Parts Unknown for Image, and his creator-owned title for World Famous Comics, Death Avenger. He has also illustrated for White Wolf Publishing, Microsoft's Age of Empires trading card game, Men In Black for Sony, and Star Trek for the Paramount Pictures licensee, Last Unicorn Games. Since 1997, Joe has been providing Star Wars artwork for Lucasfilm books and magazines and his currently illustrating for the new Star Wars role-playing game from Wizards of the Coast. To see more of Joe's artwork, visit his official website at www.joecorroney.com.
You can also view online galleries of his published and unpublished Star Wars art at the following websites...
www.theforce.net
www.echostation.com
www.rebelpilots.com/
Contact Joe at
jcorroney@earthlink.net

M² a.k.a. **Mike Maydak,** fresh out of the fabled halls of High School, has been taken under-wing as the patawan in training at the Blue Line Pro ranch. He is learning much from the experienced crew at Sketch about the comic industry and has mastered the technique of "getting lunch". He often contributes in the form of graphic design, writing, and editorial work. He is currently attending school at NKU with a creative writing major. On the side, he works on his fantasy novel.

Are you a professional working in the comics field? Would you like to help the next group of creators? Contact us at sketch@bluelinepro.com
859-282-0096

Blue Line Pro

Blue Line Productions,
8385 U.S. Highway 42,
Florence, KY 41042
(859) 282-0096
BLUELINEPRO.COM

CEO - Mike Hickey
Creative Director - Bob Hickey
Circulation - Carol Doolin

Comic books are a fun media and one of the few that anyone could create their own visions to share with others.
Blue Line Productions goals are aimed toward the enhancement of art through knowledge and quality art supplies. No matter what it takes we make sure that the reader has the information that they are wanting.

A Note...

Men•tor *n.*: an experienced and trusted adviser.
WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY 1990

Do you have mentors? I know that I do. My mentors are professionals in the comic industry who have succeeded in their respected fields.

I haven't meet many of them and truthfully I don't care if I do. I'm not interested in their personnel lives; it's how they succeeded in their careers that interests me. I don't care if they have children or a dog or even if they've done time in prison. I want to know how they succeed in their field and whether I can take something from their success and integrate it into my own system. Currently I've been working on my marketing skills. Marketing is one of my weaknesses, so I'm studying those who have succeeded in this area.

I personally believe that many of the popular creators that came from Marvel in the early-'90s owe part of their success to the marketing department of Marvel Comics at that time. A healthy market didn't hurt the cause either, but Marvel's marketing department played a big role in making Rob, Todd, Jim and others into the huge creators they became. They hyped up these creators and got the stores and readers into a frenzy about the latest and hottest projects they were working on. So Marvel's marketing skills of the 90's serves as a mentor to me.

Yes, today is a different kind of market but you have got to learn and take from what they did right. I look at everything that is sent to the retailers by publishers and creators. I study them to see if they would work for my current projects. I ask myself if it's worth investing time and finances into. On those that grab my attention, I'll follow up to see if the book is a success on the stands and if the publisher/creator delivered what they promised. I look to see if marketing paid off with articles in the print press or on the net. Here again, if it has worked I may try a version of their technique to see if it works for me.

The odds are I may never meet many of my mentors, and that doesn't matter. I'll integrate their techniques into my system and continue to look for more ways to increase my knowledge in areas that I need to expand.

Mentors.

We all need them

B.

Bob Hickey

CHUCK DIXON
interviewed

by Scott Beatty

Introduction by Flint Henry

Story construction so tight your tongue's bulging out – if you were a Chuck Dixon comic, that is! Renowned tough-miester Chuck Dixon is recognized by a style that defines itself through sparse dialogue, highly faceted characterization, and solid, highly satisfying storytelling. No over explained situations, no obtrusive and preachy exposition, no superfluous grace notes or rim-shots needed – Dixon's comic components are lean and skillfully handled, narrative threads woven seamlessly into a strong story-telling rope that has caught a legion of fans by the throat.

From the touching elegiac drama of "The Creep" to the poetic western fatalism of "The Long Ride Home", from making Bat-history in the Knightfall saga, blowing lots of stuff up in very pretty fashion in an Image Team 7 flash 'n bash, to slapstick and satire in "The Homer Show"…over the years, as other creators have become victims of fairly single minded vision or range, Dixon continually generates new concepts, innovations, fresh takes and self-projection. A dissection of some of his material can prove to be quite rewarding, providing a notebook text on plot progression, pacing, and proper handling of episodic material. However, he is rarely predictable. In an industry that often demands speed over substance, he has an excellent reputation for serving up both, tastefully and on a regular basis. His extensive knowledge of comic book staples such as localities, politics, history, and weapons (and sometimes in a Dixon book, more – and even more – weapons), as well as an eclectic background that has included children's author and storyboard artist (to mention a few of the more conventional) has served him well as he has become known as a "writer's writer," and most certainly an "artist's writer."

His speed, reliability, quality and performance are well known, making him a "go to" guy, especially in these troubled industry times. Sometimes the new bookrack might bear the Dixon credit any number of times, on a variety of books from multiple publishers.

He began his following as a "tough guy/action" writer with a substantive run on *Airboy* from Eclipse comics, a run that should have proved as a presage for his occasional pigeonholing detractors. It was there he first displayed his abilities for nuanced, fun characterization, achievement of atmosphere, and successful handling of strong female characters; all elements, among others, that would embody his future hits such as the current fan-favs *Birds of Prey* and *Nightwing*. He also showed his ability to direct his characters' motivations and actions in plausible and unpretentious fashion while allowing the reader to identify with and enjoy the stories and situations, no matter how outlandish. With clever, fun-filled titles like *Radio Boy* and *Invasion '55* he demonstrated his ease in crossing genres, going on over the years to do books as wildly divergent as *Savage Tales* and *The Simpsons* with affable aplomb and expertise.

Probably best known for his extensive, excellent work in adding to the Batman universe on a long and wide selection of regulars, minis, and one-shots at DC, his name has become a welcome tag for quality and enjoyment on a variety of characters. If you're a Punisher fan, you can't go wrong in seeking out Chuck's *Punisher: War Zone* issues, especially the first six. Like straightforward, traditional action tales - the way they used to make 'em? Check out the much-missed *Savage Tales* b&w magazine from Marvel. Enjoy high fantasy bone crunching and demon-dicing? There's also plenty of Chuck-written "Conan" material.

You're a solid sci-fi fanatic? Try his *Alien Legion*. Enjoy bloodletting and vicious brutality on a grand scale with some tongue-in (fragmented)-rib hilarity? *Lawdog* is probably still leaking intestines and brain-slick skull fragments in an Epic quarter box at your local store.

Chuck's narrative themes and techniques have changed over the years, but his trademark tough guy protagonists – vicious, mean hearted bastards – maintain classic, heroic causes and sentiments on human worth, experience, and values. Amidst the brutality, action, or studied and scientific technique of crime in the bleakest post-noir setting, there is an uplifting spirit in Dixon's work – no needless but fashionable nihilism. Whether making us go through Bane breaking Batman's back, walking us through some historical romance or doomed exotic dystopia, or letting us laugh as we relive and enjoy some bittersweet and hard-learned lesson of adolescence in *Robin*, a Chuck Dixon story is an expertly handled, fast paced and vivid comic read filled with real and evolving characters you'll identify with, care about, and want more of.

With his obvious love and dedication for the comic medium, his knowledge and handling of it, and his work ethic and integrity – a rarity in many creative fields – he is respected by his industry peers, and known to evoke strong loyalty from many of his frequent collaborators, with good reason. Chances are you're reading a Chuck Dixon title now, but if not – why not?! You'll rarely have as much fun with Frank castle and a blowtorch.

Sketch was fortunate to have Chuck for this interview – and hot new writing talent Scott Beatty to conduct it! Chuck and Scott just scribed the great new *Robin Year One* mini on the racks, and they're both up to hijinks on a large but as-yet-undisclosed upcoming Batman event – look for them on a Gotham street corner near you.

Scott: How did you get your start in comics? What was your "big break"?

Chuck Dixon: I got two "big breaks" almost simultaneously. Larry Hama bought a bunch of stories from me for SAVAGE TALES at Marvel. He was impressed enough with my speed and reliability to keep giving me more and more work and also speaking highly of me to other editors. At the same time I began submitting stories to Eclipse Comics. With a recommendation from Tim Truman I was given AIRBOY as a continuing assignment. Again, speed and reliability paid off and Cat Yronwode and Dean Mullaney gave me lots of work.

Scott: Did you always want to write comic books? Were you an avid reader as a child? If so, what hooked you on comics?

Chuck Dixon: Actually, I wanted to be an artist. The artists have always been the superstars of comics. Nothing's really changed. I wanted to BE Steve Ditko. I must have drawn hundreds of pages as a kid. But as I struck teen years it became obvious that I was a passable cartoonist, but I'd never have the chops to draw the kind of dramatic comics I wanted to do. So I concentrated more on the writing end.

As a kid I read any comic that came my way. I'd borrow entire collections from the older guys in my neighborhood. A kid from the next block came around one summer selling comics from a wagon. They were his dad's. I bought piles of Captain Marvel and WHIZ comics for a nickel each. Over and over I devoured both volumes of Steranko's History of Comics 'til the staples fell out. Back then every kid read comics. They were cheap and you could trade them or pass them around. They weren't considered collectible. But I must have
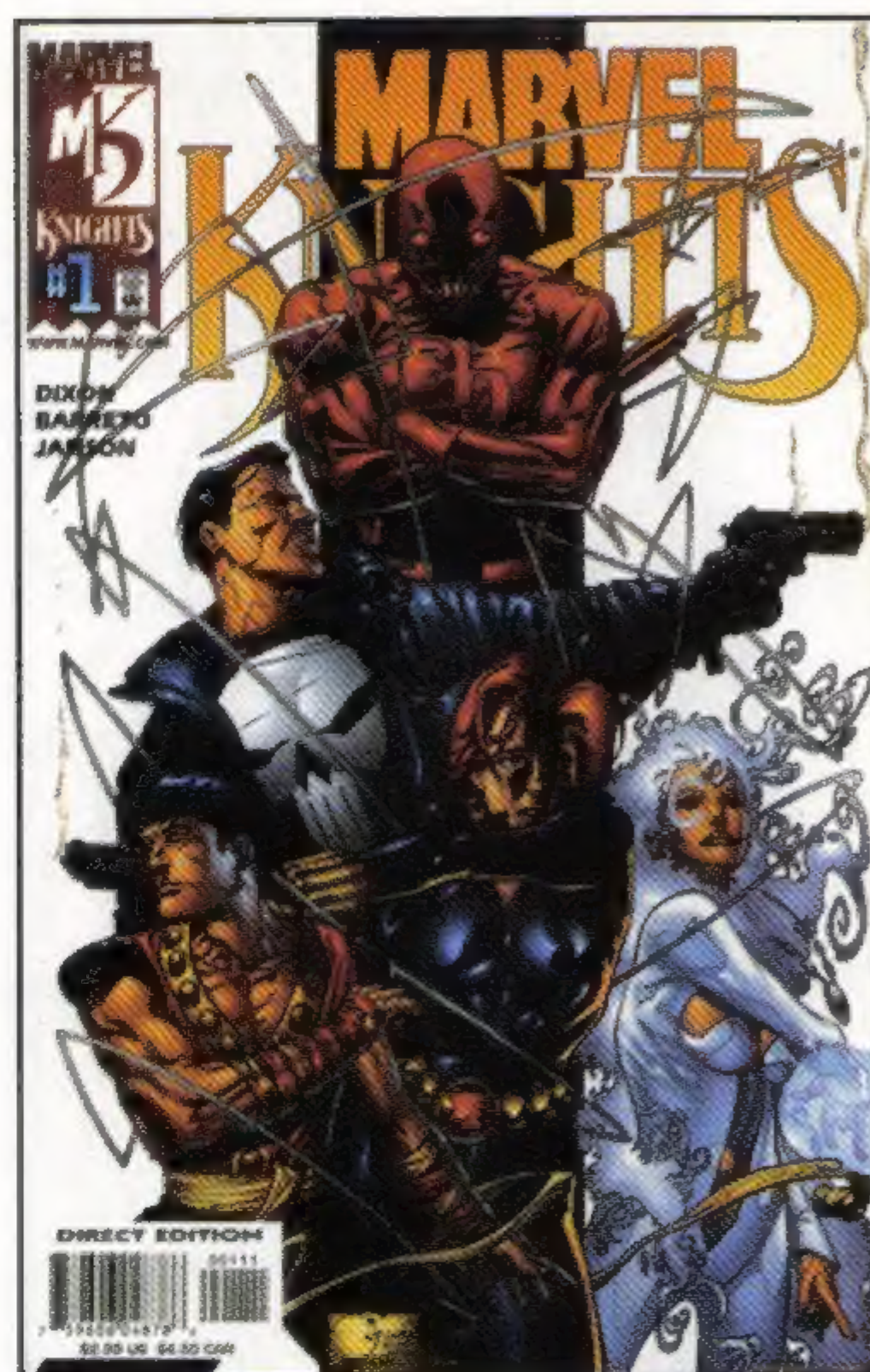
thought of them that way, 'cause I still have most of the comics I got as a kid.

Scott: Who are some of your influences, past and present?

Chuck Dixon: First and foremost would be Archie Goodwin. No one could marry words and pictures to produce "pure" comics like he did.

THE DEATH OF JOE HALLEN
THE 'NAM

No matter the genre or subject matter, Archie was in control of the material and wrote to his artist's strengths. I learned a lot from reading his work. Particularly his stuff at Warren. I could see how he tailored each story for his artist. I know now that much of this was his approach to the work as a fan. I mean he was a huge EC fan as a young guy and got to work with all of his idols, Wood, Williamson, Toth and others. He knew their work better than they did and could craft stories to bring out the best in them. He continues to be my prime influence. I think I can safely say I never write a comic story without thinking of him.

Others would be Larry Hama, another guy who "gets" comics. Larry's work always has a sense of realism and honesty about it. Even if he's working with preposterous situations, Larry always finds some little piece of truth about a character to bring out and make it all work.

Frank Robbins, who wrote and drew the Johnny Hazard newspaper strip for a jillion years and wrote some great Batman stories (He

created Man-Bat.) is another guy I admire. Again, a blend of words and pictures. And he always took his work seriously. You never got the idea he was slumming or coasting. I recently read his run on Superboy and the stories are thoughtful, lightning-paced with real heart. He really made sure his stories made sense emotionally.

Scott: With a quartet of monthlies and a steady stream of side-projects, you're one of the most ubiquitous and prolific talents in the business. How do you remain so productive? Is "writer's block" ever an issue?

Chuck Dixon: I don't believe in writer's block. I have days where I feel lazy or distracted or uninspired. On those days I don't try to write. And I don't stand on a hillside and knit my brow like Byron either. I play with the kids or volunteer to do the shopping or whatever. I can afford to do that 'cause I know the secret of writing four plus books a month; STAY WAY AHEAD OF SCHEDULE.

Bob Greenberger used to have a "dream schedule" at DC. It was a fantasy schedule; if all the scripts and art came in on the dates listed no book would ever ship late. It was a great system. Everyone knew where they stood. My goal was to beat that schedule, so that when I got my copy of my work calendar from Bob each quarter it would have as few books as possible on it. Lately I've managed to get that schedule down to having only one or two books on it. A couple of times I didn't get schedules at all because I was three months in advance of the dream projections. By doing this there's no pressure on me. I don't need to write every day, even though I usually do. It also means I'm not strapped for time and forced to hack a story out. The only downside is that editors look at my output and assume I'm always busy. I have to remind them that, in

some cases, I'm a year ahead of my published books and have time for special projects or annuals or whatever.

On both Birds of Prey and Nightwing, I had almost the entire first year of the books scripted before the pencilers got to work on them. That allowed the editor and I to look at that year in one block. We could shift events and entire arcs around to make the year tighter and the subplots move more compellingly. You can't do that if you're on the hot (late) list every month.

Scott: What's the easiest way to distract you from your computer?
Chuck Dixon: Almost anything. A bit of string. A dust mote floating by. A car horn six miles away. That's the hardest thing about being a writer. It's all in your head until you get it down in words. And in between those two things, the thought and the words, is everything else in life.

Scott: In recent years, you've become known for your "Ten Commandments to Comic Book

EXTRA-SIZED ISSUE!
NIGHTWING
50

DIXON
LAND
MARZAN JR.
GERACI

6

Writing," a popular panel staple at comic conventions. How has this formula been successful for you in the comics industry? Do you recommend it for aspiring comics writers? Can it work for them also?

Chuck Dixon: The Commandments are rules I made up for myself. I'm very structured in how I want to present my stories. I worked it down to ten things I have to remember to keep a story entertaining and fast paced. It all goes back to balancing the words and pictures. The Commandments serve to remind me that this is a visual medium, so the less words the better. When I write I remain as invisible as possible to the readers and let the artist tell the story. I'm not there to prove I have a thicker thesaurus than the next writer. People who've either read the Commandments on my website (dixonverse.com) or attended one of the lectures I give in Chicago tell me it helped them focus on what's important in telling a comic story. But I really only wrote the rules for me, and trotted them out publicly at the urging of one of my editors.

Scott: You're known for your high-concept action tales. Do you ever feel typecast or marginalized in the industry?

Chuck Dixon: I was severely typecast for a long time. I was told I only wrote action stuff with no substance to it. I was "Fonzied" to the Nth degree. But that's not always a bad thing. At least I was remembered for something. But I think I've broken out of that mold in recent years. I'm getting a reputation now for handling character relationships and even (gasp!) romance. I like a good shoot-em-up, but I also love the Peter Parker-Mary Jane stuff.

Scott: Your affection for Batman and company, as well as the Punisher, is obvious. Who's your "Holy Grail," the character you'd give it all up to write?

Chuck Dixon: The Fantastic Four. Hands down. They were my standout faves as a kid. The comic I HAD to read. I feel like I know these people after all these years, and there's lots of stuff that goes on between them that is yet to be explored.

Scott: You don't seem to be adverse to co-writing projects. How is that process different or as fulfilling as "going it alone"? And what's up with that Scott Beatty bastard?

Chuck Dixon: That guy! The phone calls, the midnight visits, tailing my car when I go to buy a Snapple. If he didn't have incriminating pictures of me with that Betty and Veronica comic I'd dump him like last week's laundry. But seriously, I write in an organic kind of way. Some guys can't work with me like that. But my three most successful collaborations have been with Beau Smith, Karl Kesel and the aforementioned stalker. In each case these guys were ego-less, only interested in telling a good story, and able to shift gears on a dime. I've co-written a couple of times with Graham Nolan and it would remind be of When Titans Clash! We're both very opinionated and strong-willed people. (for me it's only when it comes to comics. For Graham, it's every aspect of his life.) So we'd get stuck on a plot point and neither could see the other's way on it. But we're pals and eventually someone would give in. And I'd change the story back to the way I wanted it in scripting. But Graham would always catch me. Generally, when I do co-write it's done this way; the other writer and I collaborate closely on plot. Then we do something that would probably ruin another writer. We go home and one guy writes the opening and the next guy follows and then the first guy picks up

where the second guy left off. So we have a general game plan with the plot, the nuances and gears of the story are worked out as we go along. It's as close to "improv" as you can get in comics. But I find it creates an energy, and you wind up with a story that's better than if it were done by one person.

The most important part in working this way is to make the collaboration seamless so that it's never apparent where one writer left off and the other began. I work with guys who share my sensibilities, so a quick write through on the finished script usually fixes any glitches.

As for being fulfilling? Some projects I want to hog for myself. But some are better with a second mind at work. The ROBIN/ SUPERBOY limited I did with Karl was like that. He was so flexible and giving to work with. It created an energy that I couldn't have ginned up on my own. And that Beatty bastard, with his encyclopedic knowledge of the DCU and his ability to twist old formulas into something fresh. Well, he's been a Godsend on projects like Robin: Year One and our upcoming 5th week stunt at DC. And he writes really funny Joker dialogue.

Scott: Many artists speak highly of the ease in adapting your scripts and call you "an artist's dream writer." What does that mean exactly?

Chuck Dixon: It means that I give them a lot of description to set the mood and "sell" them the story. But I don't intrude on how they go about interpreting the script. I don't insist that my words are carved in stone and I will brook no changes. I write what I think they want to draw. And I pile on the action. Sometimes they have to work harder on my scripts (I'm a stickler for accurate detail on gear and environments), but I find that the good artists love a challenge now and then. At least, I think that's why.

I know I'm a letterer's dream writer 'cause I'm less wordy than most.

Scott: You've worked with a veritable "who's who" of artists in comics from several continents. Are there any talents, living or dead, you'd give your left kidney with whom to collaborate?

Chuck Dixon: Wally Wood. His style and his subject matter suit me to a "T". Guns, women, monsters, spaceships and whatever. I could have written a script that would have used every one of his strong points and then some. The most action packed and action whacked story of my career.

I sometimes dream of working with Alex Toth some day. But I know I'd be so intimidated I'd break a blood vessel in my brain or something. And I'd really like to write something for John Byrne some day.

Scott: Who'd win in a fight: Batman or the Punisher?

Chuck Dixon: Batman wins every time. With six months to prepare Batman could beat Galactus.

Scott: You proclaim that you don't write good proposals, yet you're pretty successful in getting books off the ground. How does that dichotomy work?

Chuck Dixon: In having to worm my way into an editor's good graces. Usually this happens when they're stuck way behind a deadline and their writer has flown off to the Bahamas (literally or figuratively) on no notice. They need a script in a few days and another editor suggests calling me.

After I come through with the goods that editor, hopefully, sees that I can deliver. Then, when my lame-o proposal comes across his desk, he'll, hopefully remember that I got that serum through and give me a break.

Once I've established my reputation with that editor he's more open to proposals and I can pitch them in person or over the phone. That's easier for me. For some reason my proposals are DOA once I get them on paper. They always read so...dumb.

Scott: In an industry with creators seemingly jumping from book to book every six issues, you've nurtured long and mostly uninterrupted runs on your books. What's more important to you,
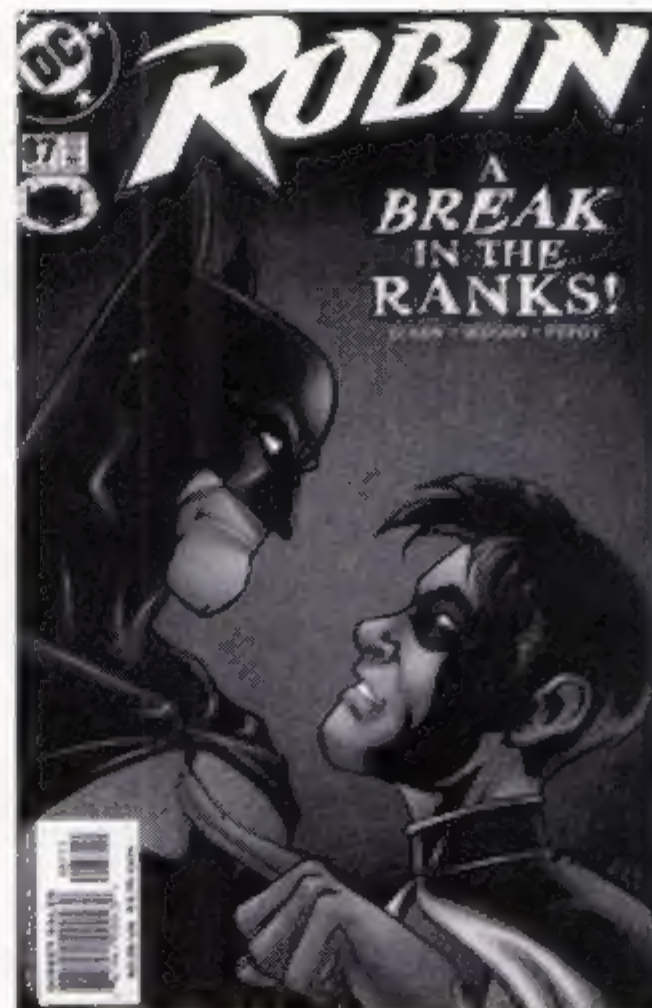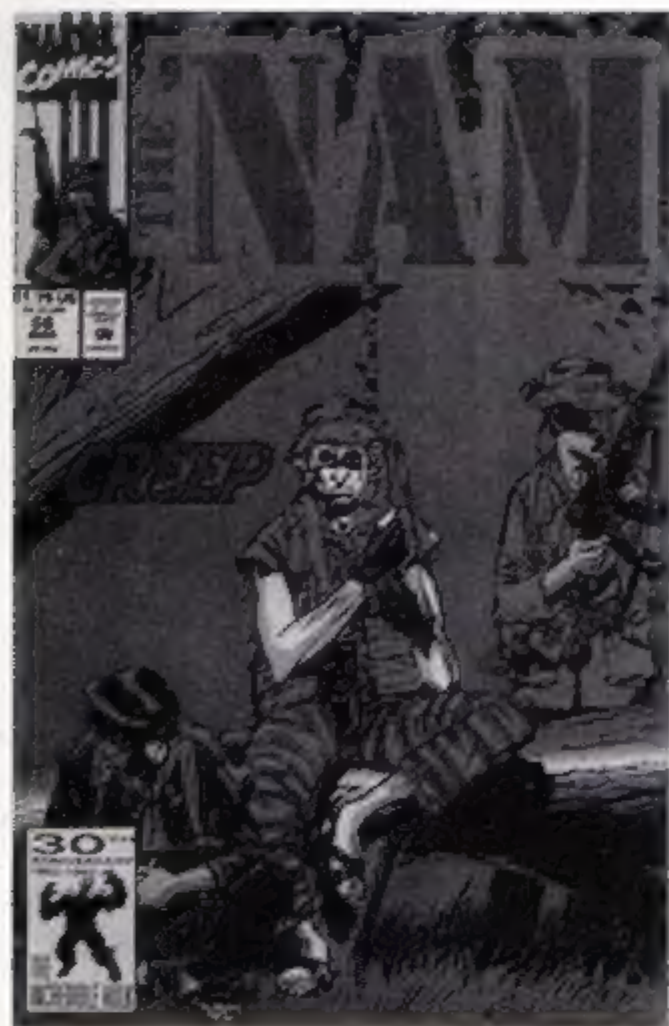
longevity on a book or a diversity of projects?

Chuck Dixon: I like to stay on a book 'til the wheels come off. I find enough diversity in special projects or one-shots or stuff like that. But my regular monthlies are "home" to me. That's where I get to tell the BIG stories and juggle supporting casts. And it's fun to mystify, torture and enrage regular readers on a monthly basis.

But I also like the opportunity to occasionally work with new artists on characters I've never dealt with before.

Scott: Favorite comic of all time?
Chuck Dixon: One issue? FANTASTIC FOUR #5, the first appearance of Doctor Doom. It has it all.

Scott: You write full-scripts as opposed to the "Marvel-style" of page breakdowns and dialogue to follow - any opposition to the latter? What works best for you?
Chuck Dixon: Full script is king with me. That way the whole story's there to be changed and corrected before the penciler ever sees it. The "Marvel" way, you wind up with lots of surprises when the art comes in. When Lee and Kirby did it the surprises were good ones; "Jack, who's this naked guy with the surfboard hanging out with Galactus?" With just about anyone else the surprises are BAD. Even artists I'm close pals with and have all the respect in the world for I

would never let work from my plot. You can't get the dramatics of each scene across to an artist in a two page plot. You get the pages back and say, "I wrote this? I don't even recognize it!" You work with a guy who likes to draw cars and the story you wrote (whether there was a single car in it or not) looks like a brochure for General Motors. You get an artist who can't draw a lot of things (or won't try) and he alters the story to leave out things like feet, buildings, animals and trees.

My only successful plot/art/ dialogue collaborations have been with Johnny Romita Jr and Joe Kubert. That speaks for itself.

Scott: Few know that you've written children's books. How do you go from scripting Punisher to traipsing through the woods with Tigger?
Chuck Dixon: It's all about taking your work seriously, but not yourself. Clint Eastwood said that. I can get as involved with Raggedy Ann and Andy as I can with Frank Castle or Bruce Wayne or the Simpsons. There's an interior logic to characters, when you find that the stories generally tell themselves.

Except Scooby Doo. That stuff is creatively bankrupt. You would have to hack a story of those characters out. There's no other way to do it.

Scott: Let's turn to the Internet. Once an admitted technophobe, you

became cyber-friendly very quickly and developed what is unarguably the friendliest website in the business, with a much-frequented chatroom open to fandom and creators alike (many of whom "lurk" under pseudonyms). You also post your scripts and offer tips on breaking in to the business. Has this fan interaction affected how you approach writing, especially with readers communicating their thoughts almost immediately after reading one of your stories?
Chuck Dixon: I don't pay much attention to the criticism on the site unless it's constructive. "The dogs bark but the caravan moves on." It can even be damning and highly critical, I'll take it into consideration. But much of the slamming I take is because the readers don't know what's coming next in the story. When that's revealed the apologies flow like water. Until the next time they think I screwed up.

The site was intended at first to bring the sales of my books closer together by creating a brand name kind of thing. That actually worked to a certain extent and I think it helped Birds of Prey's sales come closer to Robin's.

But it all evolved beyond that. Initially, I thought I'd get bored after six months of answering posts. But now it's an escape for me. It's also like meeting with old pals. The board has a personality all its own, with great regular posters like cglasgow and Scribbler.
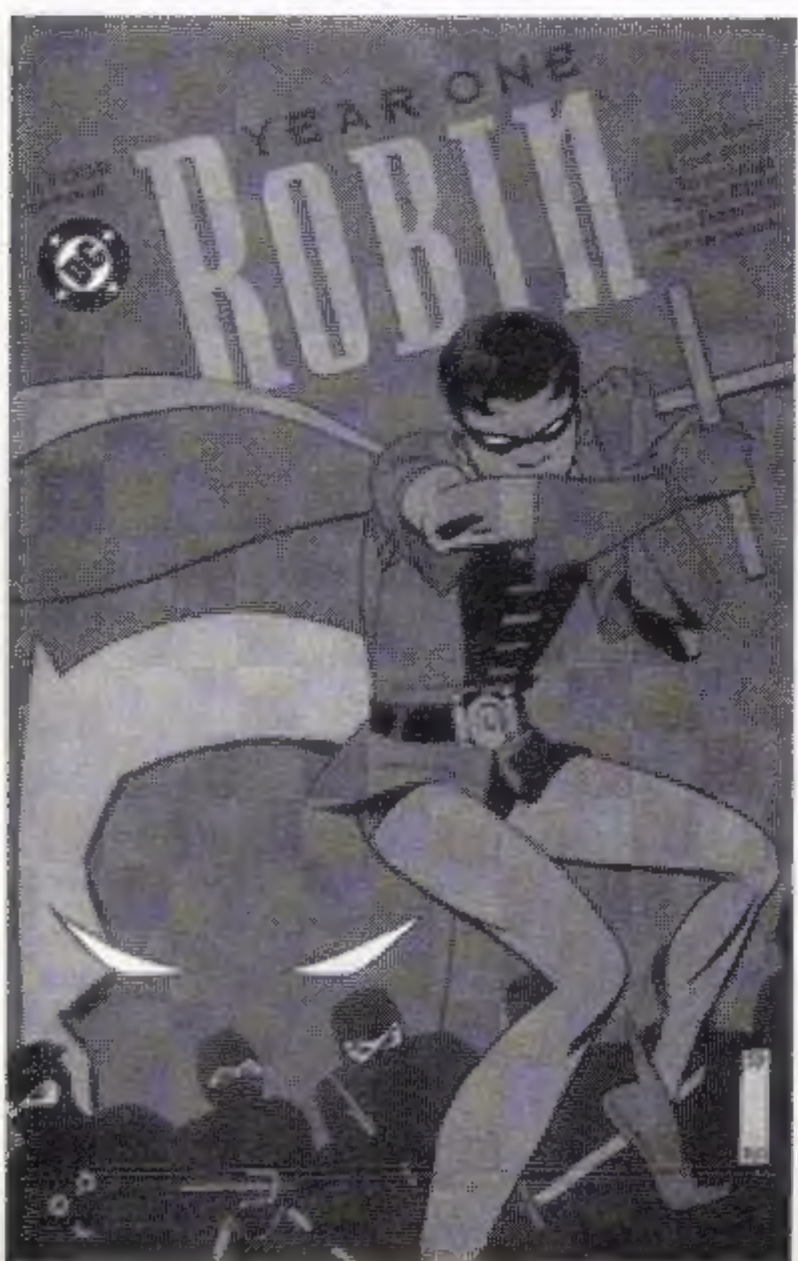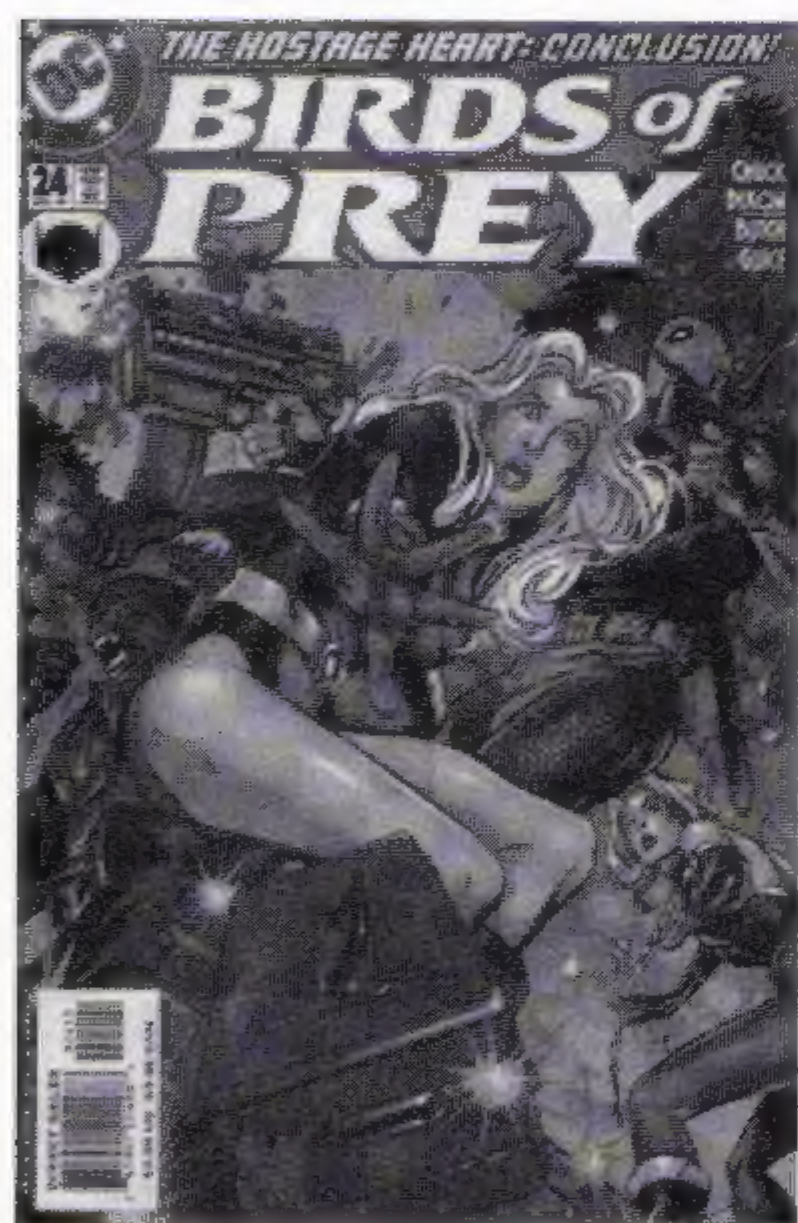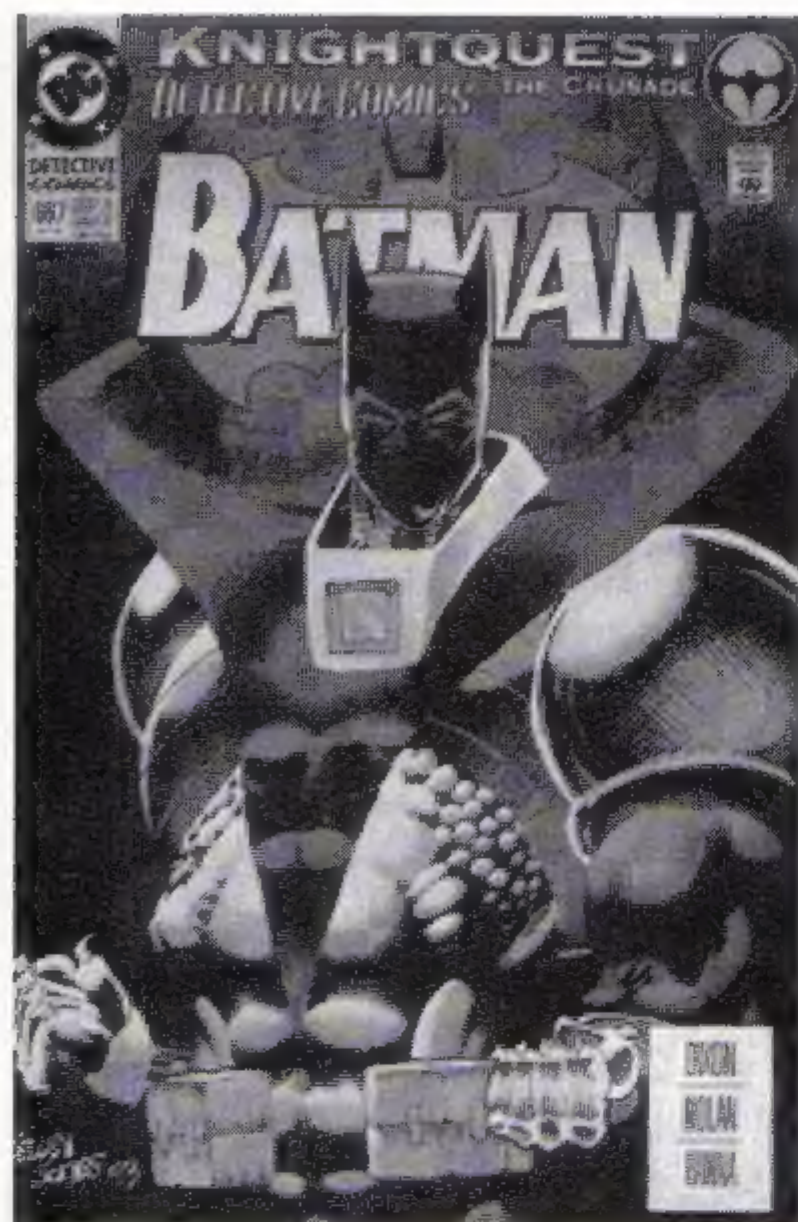
Even BigGiantHead occasionally says something that doesn't raise my blood pressure. It's not a vicious board full of whining and personal attacks like ANY other board I've visited. We argue, you'd better believe it, but it never gets mean or vindictive. Close, sometimes.

And Scott McCullar makes it all happen. He works so hard and does so much for the site that I sometimes feel bad that I pay him in old Acclaim comics.

Scott: What's the best advice you would give to an aspiring comic book writer?

Chuck Dixon: Be a pit bull. Latch on to an editor and never let go. Phone him, fax him, e-mail him. Get interviews with him in his offices. Send him stories and scripts and proposals even when he screams at you to stop. You have to get noticed. You're dealing only in words; words that have to be read. You make it so the only way you'll get off an editor's back is if he reads your proposal.

But, when he tells you it sucks ditch water, you have to take it like a Marine. Don't cry or sob or beg in his presence. Then he'll feel uncomfortable working with you cause you're a crybaby. Fall apart in private if you have to. But keep a game face to editors and hand them another proposal as soon as you can scrape one together. All of this shows you won't crack under deadlines or burn out after writing three issues.

Scott: What work of yours are you most proud?

Chuck Dixon: THE 'NAM #66 is the best story I ever wrote or ever will write. The hand of God moved through me that day. I sat down to script, and when I looked up I was finished and six hours had flashed by in seconds.

But I'm also darn proud of WINTERWORLD, LAW DOG, DETECTIVE ANNUAL #7, NIGHTWING 1-12, PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL 1-6, BATMAN: THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE, SGT ROCK BATTLE OF THE BULGE SPECIAL, and a bunch of others

Scott: How do you start a comic script?

Chuck Dixon: I type, PAGE ONE, SPLASH and then bang my head against the monitor screen until the streams of blood short out the keyboard.

I usually come up with the opening. Once I have what I think is a compelling opening the rest seems to flow. I have openings written for comics I won't get to for months. I have a MARVEL KNIGHTS opening I'm dying to use. It's all scripted and waiting for a slot.

I can come up with these opening while driving or walking or sometimes in those moments just before waking in the morning.

Scott: Is there a signature "Dixon Style"?

Chuck Dixon: That would be for others to decide. I would hope it's fast pacing and entertaining dialogue.

Scott: Who'd win in a fight: Beau Smith or a Silverback Gorilla?

Chuck Dixon: Beau would win. Especially if he had advance warning. I figure he'd run it over with his truck first then let his fox terrier Buddy loose on it. And even if Beau lost he'd make it sound like he won.

Scott: If you weren't writing comics, you'd be..._____.

Chuck Dixon: Miserable.

Scott: Scenario: You are Marvel Comics Editor-In-Chief for one year...WHAT-DO-YOU-DO?

Chuck Dixon: I'd make everyone go back to MARVEL 101. Get back to the basics that made the

core characters great. They've changed and transmogrified the characters in service to sales stunts and "high concept" crossovers and witless creators to the point where many of them are unrecognizable. You can be daring and creative and artsy without straying form the center of what makes a character enduring. Nobody's been more whipped around creatively than Batman but he's always recognizable. Whether he's done by Dick Sprang or Jon Muth, he's still quintessential Batman. I don't even KNOW the guy swinging around as Spider-Man any more. And it's not about being retro or turning the clock back. You can be true to the Lee/Ditko/Kirby models and still be innovative. But I think Marvel's heading this way any way. They're making more nods to their past and bringing characters (like the Punisher) back to their roots.

As always, Sketch would like to thank Chuck and Scott for taking time out of their burgeoning schedules for interview time. Look for Chuck's material almost everywhere at your local friendly comic shop, and be sure to check out Scott's writing in Robin #88-91, as well as his great new Ultimate Batman hardback.

CHUCK DIXON CHECK LIST
Supplied by WWW.DIXONVERSE.COM - webmaster Scott McCullar

Apple Comics
THE TIME JUMP WAR 1 3
INVASION '55 1 3

Bongo
TREEHOUSE OF HORROR #4 (lead story)
THE SIMPSONS #42

Comico
PRIMER #6 (1st Evangeline story)
EVANGELINE 1 2

Dark Horse
PREDATOR JUNGLE TALES
ALIENS PIG

DC Comics
BATMAN THE CHALICE Graphic Novel
BATMAN CALENDAR MAN 80 Page Giant
SUPERMAN/ALIENS II 3 ISSUES
SIX FLAGS BATMAN/RIDDLER SPECIAL
YOUNG JUSTICE 8 22
SINS OF THE YOUTH BATBOY AND ROBIN 1
GOTHAM SECRET FILES & ORIGINS 1
WEIRD WAR TALES 1
THRILLING COMICS 1
ROBIN MINI SERIES 6 ISSUES
BATMAN 467-469 560-562 571 Annual 23
ROBIN II MINI SERIES 4 ISSUES
DETECTIVE COMICS 644-729 738
ROBIN III MINI SERIES 6 ISSUES
LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT 55-57 82 124 Annual 5
DETECTIVE COMICS ANNUAL 6-10
VENGEANCE OF BANE 1 2
BATMAN THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE (PLOTTED WITH GRAHAM NOLAN)
JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE #4
ROBIN 1 to the present annuals 2-6
NIGHTWING ½ 1 to the present
NIGHTWING SECRET FILES #1
HUNTRESS MINI SERIES 1-4
BATMAN CHRONICLES 1-4 9 11
BIRDS OF PREY ONE MAN'S HELL
BIRDS OF PREY REVOLUTION
BIRDS OF PREY MANHUNT MINI SERIES 4 ISSUES
BIRDS OF PREY WOLVES
BIRDS OF PREY BATGIRL
BIRDS OF PREY 1 to the present
SECRET ORIGINS 80 PAGE GIANT #1 (ROBIN SPOILER ORIGINS)
BATMAN VILLAINS SECRET FILES (LOST PAGES AND PROFILES)
MANBAT MINI SERIES 3 ISSUES
SHOWCASE '94 #11 (MAN-BAT)
G.C.P.D. MINI SERIES 4 ISSUES
GORDON'S LAW MINI SERIES 4 ISSUES
BATMAN BLACKGATE
CATWOMAN/VAMPIRELLA THE FURIES
CATWOMAN PLUS SCREAMQUEEN 1
BATMAN/WILDCAT MINI SERIES 3 ISSUES (WITH BEAU SMITH)
CATWOMAN/WILDCAT MINI SERIES 4 ISSUES (WITH BEAU SMITH)
ROBIN PLUS ARGENT DOUBLE SHOT 1
ROBIN PLUS FANG 2
BATMAN SECRET FILES 1 (LOST PAGES AND PROFILES)
BATMAN vs PREDATOR III MINI SERIES 4 ISSUES
BANE OF THE DEMON MINI SERIES 4 ISSUES
BATMAN 80 PAGE GIANT #1
BATMAN BLACK AND WHITE #2
BATMAN THE JOKER'S APPRENTICE (CHILDREN'S BOOK)
BATMAN THE CHALICE
CATWOMAN 12 15-21 25 27 30 37
GREEN ARROW 83 93-137 1,000,000 and Annual #7
SHOWCASE '95 #4 (GREEN ARROW STORY)
SUPERMAN 80 PAGE GIANT #2 (SUPERMAN/STEEL)
SUPERMAN THE ODYSSEY (with Graham Nolan)
YOUNG JUSTICE SPECIAL #1 (with Scott Beatty)
SUPERMAN MEETS THE MOTORSPORTS CHAMPIONS (a Special Projects comics in which Supes meets the NASCAR drivers I think it's a giveaway at the tracks this summer)
GREEN LANTERN 80 PAGE GIANT #2 (Kyle and Guy Gardner)
SGT ROCK SPECIAL #2 THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE
THE FLINTSTONES AND THE JETSONS #7 (Jetsons story)
THE SECRET SIX #1 (Tangent)
GREEN LANTERN ANNUAL #5
GREEN LANTERN THE NEW CORPS 1,2
SUPERGIRL ANNUAL 1,2
DCU HOLIDAY BASH II III
THE CONJURORS 1-3
ADVENTURE COMICS 80 PAGE GIANT #1 (Green Arrow story "The Longshot")
BATMAN HUNTRESS/SPOILER BLUNT TRAUMA (CATACLYSM 1 SHOT)
PYSBA RATS MINI SERIES 3 ISSUES
BATMAN/SPAWN WAR DEVIL
CONJURORS 1-3
JUSTICE RIDERS
SUPERMAN 80 PAGE GIANT #2
SUPERMAN THE ODYSSEY
YOUNG JUSTICE NO MAN'S LAND #1
BATMAN NO MAN'S LAND SECRET FILES & ORIGINS #1
BATMAN BULLOCK'S LAW
DC ONE MILLION 80-PAGE GIANT #1
ELSEWORLD'S 80-PAGE GIANT #1 (This issue was recalled in the U.S.A. due to a controversial feature by another writer. Some copies made it to shelves in England. Chuck's story was an Elseworld's BIRDS OF PREY feature)
THE FLASH ANNUAL #13
ROBIN 80-PAGE GIANT #1

THE BATMAN CHRONICLES #22
BATMAN GOTHAM ADVENTURES #29
ACTION COMICS #771
ROBIN YEAR ONE #1 4 (with Scott Beatty)
NIGHTWING 80-PAGE GIANT #1
BATMAN NO MAN'S LAND VOL 4 TRADE PAPERBACK

Eclipse
STRIKE 1-6
STRIKE vs SGT STRIKE #1
THE AIRFIGHTERS vs SGT STRIKE #1
THE SWORDS OF TEXAS 1 3 (lead feature with SCOUT spinoff characters)
WINTERWORLD 1-3
THE BLACK TERROR 1 3 (co-written with Beau Smith)
TALES OF TERROR 5-12 (each has at least one story by me)
ALIEN ENCOUNTERS 11 13 14 (each has one story by me)
AIRBOY 1-50
TARGET AIRBOY #1 (Airboy meets the Radioactive Blackbelt Hamsters Forgettable)
VALKYRIE 1-4 MINI
VALKYRIE 1-3 2ND MINI
SKYWOLF 1 3 MINI
AIRBOY MEETS THE PROWLER #1 (co-written with Tim Truman)
MAD DOGS 1 3
AXA 1 and 2
TOTAL ECLIPSE #5
RADIO BOY #1
THE HOBBIT

Epic
SEVEN BLOCK #1
EPIC ANTHOLOGY BOOK THREE (an Alien Legion short story)
CAR WARRIORS 1-4
ALIEN LEGION 1 18 2ND SERIES
ALIEN LEGION: ONE PLANET AT A TIME 1-3
ALIEN LEGION GRIMROD 1
ALIEN LEGION BINARY DEEP 1
ALIEN LEGION ON THE EDGE 1 3
ALIEN LEGION THE TENANTS OF HELL 1-2
LAWDOG 1 10
LAWDOG MEETS GRIMROD 1
HEAVY HITTERS ANNUAL 1 (Lawdog bridging story)
WAR MAN 1 and 2

First
EVANGELINE 1 12
Classics Illustrated-CALL OF THE WILD

Image
TEAM SEVEN 1-4 MINI
TEAM SEVEN 1 3 2ND MINI
TEAM SEVEN 1-4 THIRD MINI

Marvel Comics
MARVEL KNIGHTS 1 ongoing
SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN 133-135 137 139-156 158 159 161-165 170 172 178-179 183, 186
CONAN THE SAVAGE 1-4 7 9
SAVAGE TALES 1-8
MOON KNIGHT (3rd SERIES?) 1 24 34
PUNISHER 45 49 64 89-93 97 104
PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL 38-42 44-63 75-80
PUNISHER SUMMER SPECIAL 2 3 4
PUNISHER WAR ZONE 1 11 25 (BACK-UP) 26-37 41
PUNISHER WAR ZONE ANNUAL 1
PUNISHER BACK TO SCHOOL SPECIAL 1
PUNISHER ANNUAL 6
PUNISHER HOLIDAY SPECIAL 3
PUNISHER KINGDOM GONE (graphic novel)
PUNISHER A MAN CALLED FRANK (the Punisher western)
WHAT IF 57 58 67 68 70 78
HAWKEYE MINI SERIES 1-4
PUNISHER 2099 29-34
MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS 152-154 (MOON KNIGHT Story)
THE NAM 43 46 48 54-69
DR LIGHT ? (a fill-in but don't have the issue)
WHAT IF ——? (an Alien Legion parody but don't have the issue number)
CODE OF HONOR 1-4
KA-ZAR THE SAVAGE
KA-ZAR GUNS OF THE SAVAGE LAND
DOOM 1 3 Mini-series
MARVEL KNIGHTS #1 ongoing
FANTASTIC FOUR THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMIC MAGAZINE #1
IRON MAN 21

New Comics
YOUNG MASTER 5-9
THE MASTER 1
DEMON BLADE 1
DEMON BLADE SPECIAL 1

Now Comics
RACER X 1-10 (I THINK THIS WAS A SECOND SERIES?)
ALIAS 1-5
TERMINATOR SPECIAL COLLECTORS EDITION 1-2
SUPERCOPS 1-4
THE TWILIGHT ZONE #4
THE GREEN HORNET 1 10
MR 1 1&2
FREEJACK

Other Comics
PROPHET comics from Liefeld
G-8 AND HIS BATTLE ACES from Blazing Comics
EVANGELINE comic from a company called "LP Comics"
A book featuring a character called "Web-Man" from Argosy

Foreign Publications
PHANTOM TRADING CARD SET for an Australian company
A series called THE VANISHERS that ran in FANTOMET COMICS in Sweden
Two episodes of CHUCK RILEY for Semic in Sweden
A single issue of Italian CONAN comic. This story only appears in Italian

Unpublished Work
Here's a list of unpublished stuff I've done. Continuity has passed most of it by so it'll probably never see the light of day.

PUNISHER IN THE SAVAGE LAND
A 64 page prestige book written by me with art by Gary Kwapisz. Frank Castle infiltrates a militia group only to discover that they are part of a HYDRA operation guarding natural gas wells in the Savage Land! Hank is soon found out to be the Punisher and escapes with his life but not much else. He takes over a tribe of primitive warriors using his estimable tactical skills uses their might to take over other tribes uniting them under one banner and attacking the Hydra firebase trying waste to it.

TWO ISSUES OF PUNISHER 2099
Written by me with art by Alcatena. Jake is infected with some weird gene-altering drug by a wicked villain named Daddy Wronglegs (love that name!) The end result is that Jake sprouts a couple of weird insectoid appendages that God did not intend him to have. Jake battles a whole cast of gene altered men and beasts and finally finds the antidote to return him to human form.

LEGENDS OF THE DARK KNIGHT
"KEEP" Written by with art by Gary Kwapisz (poor Gary). Batman invades a crack fortress in a high rise housing project. When he is severely wounded he is taken in by a little boy when his mom is at work. The boy helps hide Batman while a whole gang of crack crazed killers searches the building for him.

WINTERSEA is described in the Winterworld article.

A PUNISHER WAR ZONE arc. A western tale of Frank Castle in which he heads south of the border in search of Pancho Villa just steps ahead of Lt George Patton. Art by Russ Heath

TWO BATMAN INVENTORIES written by me with Jim Aparo art. In one a killer uses séances as a way of covering up his crimes and nearly does Batman in. The second concerns Batman and Harvey Bullock at odds as they hunt down the same killer.

ROBIN INVENTORY. Ives loves reading novels about conspiracies by a popular author. When Tim accompanies Ives to a book signing he discovers that the author really IS being stalked by a conspiracy and as Robin moves into action to save the guy. Art by Jason Armstrong

GREEN ARROW INVENTORY STORY Ollie and Connor in an untold adventure from their days at the ashram. The two must defeat a gang of bank robbers who have taken the monks hostage while using the ashram as a hideout.

GREEN ARROW 10 PAGE STORY "Three For The Road". A story that takes place between GREEN ARROW #92 and #93 in which Ollie, Connor and Eddie are on the road right after leaving the ashram and heading to Ojo Caliente. The three are in Eddie's Woodie as they are pursued by some agents that want them dead. Penciled by Scott McCullar

LAWDOG SPECIAL with art by Alcatena. Lawdog and Ivre find themselves in a world where the Roman Empire never fell and is now at war in the New World using pre-WWI technology (gatling guns mounted on war elephants) and have lent siege to Cincinnatus in the Ohi Valley now held by Turks and the Lakota league. But there's a flying machine here that does not belong and Lawdog means to find out where it came from.

TWO PART ARC INTENDED FOR DETECTIVE art by Brian Stelfreeze
A psychologist at Arkham begins to suspect that maybe the inmates are on to something when they all talk about this Batman guy. She goes on a hunt for the source of her patients' neuroses. And what she finds is Man-Bat. She brings him back to Arkham for study and he escapes and scares the bejeebers out of everyone incarcerated at Arkham 'til Batman shows to rescue them.

Children's Books
THE WINNIE THE POOH WORD BOOK (Platt and Munk)
TRAVELS WITH POOH (Platt and Munk)
RAGGEDY ANN AND ANDY GO FLYING (Little Golden Books)
FLASH TERROR! (unpublished solicited by Gingerbread Books)

From The Ranch

MAKE IT A HABIT

By Beau Smith

Habits. There are good ones. There are bad ones. The good ones help you make the most of your goals and where you want to go with your career. The bad ones can undermine and disable you. If you're looking to get into this business we call comic books or if you just wanna be better at that other thing you do, you need to keep good habits. Here are a few that I think will help you out. They won't make you any better looking or make you smell pretty, but they might just help you a little further up the ladder.

1. Write It Down:

Every day you should have a list, large or small, of what you have to do or accomplish that day. You can invest in one of those Palm Pilots or use your computer, but I like doin' it on paper myself. No batteries to worry about and it can take more abuse. Folks that get things done not only have goals, but they write them down and review them every day. Writing down your goals keeps the motivation right there in your face like a nagging wife. Written goals keep your mind off the Playstation game and keep you focused, knowing where you want to go keeps you from taking the wrong turn during the workday. If it's written down that you have to finish that splash page, that script, that color job then you are more likely to get it done without an excuse.

2. Stop And Listen:

How often are you more interested in what YOU have to say than in the person you're talking to? Do you have more answers than questions? Do you go into the conversation with an agenda that YOU want to get the other person to just listen to your wants and needs? Trust me...if you're gonna get very far into the comic book business you're gonna have to be a better listener than a talker. They say that information is power. Well, you don't get information by talking. You get it by having an open ear and learning. You become a good listener...you then become a great talker. The thing is you will speak less words, but they will carry more weight. You will be the "go to guy'. Listening is a very powerful gear for success. Yet most of us are terrible listeners. The main thing to listening is this: notice when you're thinking about your answer instead of listening—stop, focus on what the other person is saying and ask more questions. You'll find that your job in comics will become so clear when you let others open your own thoughts.

3. Pay Attention To Your Actions and Not Your Results:

Most of us are taught that it's the results that really matter, a focus on results can actually be counterproductive. You should focus on your actions and let the results find their own way to the dance.

Actions are what creates the results. Don't put the cart before the donkey. The only thing you'll get is a cart that won't move and donkey dump on your boots. It makes sense that continuous action, being proactive, will produce more and greater results. Complete each action before you move on to the next. That gives you the drive to move on and accomplish the next goal. When you get that script from the writer, don't sit and draw all the fun splash pages first. Draw it in order and get the feel of the natural sequence of the story. Your end result will be accomplished because you focused on the action.

4. Keep You Word:

"Editors that don't return their phone calls just don't care". "He said he sent me the script, but they never came." "She said she would draw a page a day, but here it is two weeks later and all I have are five pages." "THEY MUST NOT CARE ABOUT THIS JOB!" That conclusion may not be the truth, but it may be the conclusion that is spoken when others don't return their calls, keep their word and break their promise. Keeping your agreements in a timely manner is both professional and duplicable; it's the kind of action you want to encourage all the folks in your network to emulate. It's also great for your rep to be known as someone they can count on. That's one of the first

lessons I gave my sons on how to be a real man. Your word is your bond. Break it and you might as well put on a dress and walk real funny. Return those calls and emails. Be there when you say you will. Never say you were too busy. That's a crutch you don't wanna lean on. Everybody is busy—don't forget that.

5. Get Rid Of Gab Flab:

Limit the time you talk on the phone. Yeah, it's nice to catch up and shoot the bull, but just think about how much time that cuts into your work and your phone bill. Placing a time limit on your calls makes you more productive and saves you a little more money. As a general rule 80% of what we say is not to the point. Now I'm not talking about being rude, far from it. It just pays on both ends if you become a lean, mean talkin' machine rather than a Jabber Jaw The Hutt. The phone may be the most powerful business tool you have...but only if you're really doing the business.

6. Multi-Task = Multi Mistakes:

Focus is Key. Lots of us split our focus—writing notes, or organizing while we're on the phone. Inking while talking, drawing while on the phone, having two conversations at once—a common trap for the home based freelancer. Always torn between family and work. The family must realize that you are at work. Jack of all trades and master of none. I wish I had thought that one up because it is so true. Give your full attention to the job at hand. It cuts down on frustration and increases your productivity. If not, you're cheating others as well as yourself. Distraction saps your energy. If you're like most freelancers I know you don't have that much to start with. You like to stay up late, sleep late, watch movies and play video games—WHEN YOU SHOULD BE CRANKING OUT THAT BOOK! I think you will find that if you focus on the task at

hand you won't be tripping over your foot later.

You may write or draw about super heroes that can stop the train before it runs over the damsel in distress, knock off the alien invasion and still have time to use their X-ray vision to look through Jennifer Lopez's clothes, but you can't. Focus is the word. Do that and you will find you're always a few steps ahead of the next guy trying to get that job.

Things are pretty simple when you stop to break em' down. If I can figure it out I know you can.

Comic books are what you make em'. Make em' good.

Beau Smith
beaus@bluelinepro.com

Artwork by Chuck Dixon.

Thoughts on Scripting Comic Books

by Tom Bierbaum

It seems like I've been dealing mostly with peripheral aspects of comic-book scripting in my earlier columns, and haven't really been addressing the actual craft of writing all that much.

That's partly because I'm reluctant to say any one approach to writing is good or bad. For example, most of the things you might learn in, say, a creative writing course would push you away from the techniques of an old-fashioned juvenile-appeal comic-book, and it's the lack of just such comics that, I think, is hurting the industry today a lot more than any lack of more ambitious comics.

Be that as it may, I'll plunge in here and try to get into some very specific issues involving the writing process itself. Today's topic: smooth dialogue and distinctive speech patterns.

1. The trick to scripting a comic (or a movie or anything else) is to communicate lots of information smoothly within the dialogue.

Here, for example, is a typically clunky bit of expositional dialogue from an early 1960s Legion of Super-Heroes story: "This delegation of aliens from a far world can't speak any known language...But Saturn Girl, with her telepathic power of thought-casting, can interpret for us!" Now obviously, nobody in the real world would talk like that and only the most innocent kid reader is going to accept a line of dialogue like that without losing a little belief in the universe you're presenting.

But if you want to give yourself a tough little writing exercise, try communicating that same information in the same small amount of space with more natural-sounding dialogue. It

ain't easy, and the reason those old clunky comics worked as well as they did for millions of kid readers is that their seemingly inept dialogue communicated a ton of story within a very tight space, giving kids a heck of a lot of bang for their 12 cents.

Here's an example, though, of how basically the same information can be communicated in a more conversational manner: "It's working! Saturn Girl is unscrambling their thoughts telepathically...translating them into Interlac for us!" "Now maybe we can figure out what this delegation came to Earth for."

That's one more word than the original passage, but it does read a little more smoothly. Note that we sacrificed some clarity, leaving it to readers to figure out that the weird-looking characters in the panel are "aliens from a far world" (where else would they be from, Parsipany, N.J.?), and skipped specifying that they "can't speak any known language," which is implied by the need to have a telepathic interpreter in the first place. In perhaps the biggest sacrifice, we don't clearly tell the reader that Saturn Girl's super-power is telepathy, and that telepathy is related to "thought-casting." That's a gamble, hoping that most readers who could've figured out what "thought-casting" means could also figure out what "telepathically" means without the "thought-casting" clue.

As you can see, we cut some unnecessary language and sacrificed a bit of clarity to buy the space we needed to add a few conversational touches, with the end result being dialogue that reads a little more credibly.

Try it yourself. Take one of the best of the old clunkily written com-

ics and re-write it in roughly the same space with more natural, conversational dialogue and more interesting captions. If you can train yourself to clearly tell one of those old, crowded stories more artfully in the same space, you shouldn't have much trouble with today's more open approach to story telling.

As an aside, one of the toughest challenges is working in the character's names smoothly. Normally, people don't address one another by name very often in conversation, but you've got to tell the reader who's who (especially if you're writing a crowded book like the Legion or an X-Men book). Just do your best to work the names in smoothly and try not to overdo it.

Ironically, I can remember a letter-writer scolding us once for bothering to throw a character's name into the dialogue at a point where no reader needed to be told who that character was. What the letter-writer missed was that using the character's name was, in this case, just part of the natural flow of the dialogue. People do sometimes use each other's names in their natural dialogue.

2. Keep it short.

Space is always at a premium in comics. Even in those rare instances when the artist leaves you lots of room, most readers are going to find huge blocks of script daunting. Keep it quick, lively and entertaining.

Remember, you're not being paid by the word. What makes comic-book writers worth big paychecks is not the number of words they write, but how good they are at telling a riveting story in as few words as possible.

3. Fill the spaces given you.

This is the opposite of what we were saying in number two. If an artist leaves you a big blank portion on the page, it becomes your job as the writer to fill it in. We blew that on a couple occasions when we gave the artist very specific dialogue exchanges in the plot and we'd get back pages with way more room than we needed. We tended to just stick with our original sparse dialogue, reluctant to start over on a page we'd already worked out and assuming the artist left the space intentionally, knowing it would look okay in the final product. And then when the actual comic did come out, there'd be too much empty space, hurting the look and feel of the comic.

So figure out ways to have fun with those bonus extra spaces, communicating something cool that hasn't managed to make it into the comic previously. It isn't easy — often those extra spaces pop up right in the middle of a rapid-fire exchange or some break in the story where there's very little at hand to address. But exercise your creativity and put those spaces to good use.

4. Give each character a distinctive speech pattern.

Really try to envision the characters and "hear" how they speak. Focus on every character long enough that they become someone flesh-and-blood and unique in your mind, and then make sure they talk in a way that reflects that unique individual.

One way of doing this is to imagine someone you know or a even professional actor playing the role of that character and then figuring out how that individual would speak in this "role."

Typical (and sometimes overused) elements of a distinctive speech pattern include:

- Dropping letters (like the G's from the "ing" endings) to make someone seem easy-going and informal: "If ya know what I'm talkin' about..."
- Dropping contractions to make

someone seem very formal and well educated, perhaps English is not their first language: "I do not know what you are talking about..."
- Hip dialogue to identify the "with-it" characters, your latter-day versions of Snapper Carr: "Whoa, man, watch where you're goin'!" But be careful here if you're not exactly hip yourself, or your characters can end up sounding like the kids from "The Brady Bunch" ("Hey, Greg, that was a groovy song.")
- Foreign and regional dialects: "Aren't ya bein' just a wee bit paranoid there, Mr. Krinn?" for a polite Scotsman (this line would be typical for our Legion character Devlin O'Ryan) or "Aren't y'all bein' a little paranoid?" for a Southerner, or "No worries, mate" for an Australian. But exercise extreme caution here. Most of the cliched speech patterns for other nationalities or ethnic groups are, for one thing, just that, cliches. But more important, they're often considered objectionable by the group involved, or if they aren't now, they soon will be. Keep it subtle and try as hard as you can to do some genuine research and make people from these groups talk not the way we think of them as talking, but they way they really talk. For example, Scottish people really do say "wee," Southerners really do say "y'all" and Australians really do say "no worries." But skip the "shrimp on the barbie" business if you don't want to sound tired and corny.
- The formality with which characters address each other. Most of the Legionnaires called easy-going Cosmic Boy by his first name, Rokk, but the overly polite young newcomer Devlin called him "Mr. Krinn" and trouble-making Kono called him "Rokk Bottom."
- Stutters, stammers and other verbal tricks. Shy, timid and/or nervous characters will be reluctant to express themselves and that comes

out in excess baggage within their dialogue: "Uh, D-Devlin, do you... do you really think this is such a good idea?" Listen for other filler people throw into their speech and make the more entertaining examples part of a particular character's speech patterns: "And he's like, y'know, so paranoid" or "...he's basically paranoid," or "...frankly, he's paranoid." Sometimes this kind of excess baggage is a lot of what makes a line funny. Watch Bob Newhart sometime and observe how his stuttering and stammering adds impact to his punchlines. Or how the actors on "Friends" will preface a funny line with something "Okay, Joey...", again setting up the punchline with the kinds of phrases we use in real life to express our discomfort when we're figuring out how best to disagree with or correct someone.
- The degree to which a character does or does not use coarse language. If one character says, "Oh my gosh!" and the other says, "Holy s—t!" you've drawn a significant distinction between the two. Figure out where a character typically lands on this continuum and be consistent. Eventually you can communicate interesting bits of business by showing situations in which the "oh my gosh" guy begins swearing or where the "holy s—t" guy feels compelled to tone down his language.
- Add strange touches to alien speech to imply an unearthly accent. In the Legion, we had our Dominators speak with multiple R's, implying (in our heads anyway) the "rolling R's" you get with the Spanish double R. Another reptilian alien race had multiple S's (something established before our time on the book). The Khunds tended to speak in pompous but fractured English. You can also interchange letters or substitute symbols for letters to imply alien accents and pronunciations. We also worked hard to create swearing patterns for different

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alien cultures, reflecting the unique values of each home world ("Mother God," "Sweet Muses," "Bloody Liberty," etc.).

5. Don't overdo the speech patterns.

For a long time, comics labored to give every major character a speech pattern so distinctive readers could recognize who was speaking without seeing the characters. In real life, though, it would be very hard to keep track of who was speaking just by reading an unlabeled transcript of what was said. So any comic that tries too hard to make the speech patterns that identifiable is going to start sounding a lot different than the way people really talk. And it's probably better to have your comic read smoothly and believably than to have such vividly defined speech patterns.

6. Get your speech patterns from somewhere besides other comic books

If you want your dialogue to sound fresh and authentic, don't mimic what you see in other comic books. Pick up cool touches from movies, cartoons, even comic strips. But more than that, listen to the way people talk in real life and put those unique, fresh observations into your dialogue so it sounds different and more authentic than what's already out there.

7. Watch out for repetition

Nothing makes your dialogue sound worse than accidentally using the same word too often or too close together. Read your script out loud and listen for words that pop up too often. If you suspect you've overused a word or phrase (and assuming you're working on a computer), do a word-search and see how often and how close together it turns up. When you find you've over-used something, work hard to find an alternative that works just as well.

I can remember a letter-writer criticizing us for starting too many balloons with "Well..." and we could only respond with, "Well, that's the way people talk." Regardless, we did our best thereafter not to go to that "well" too often.

We also had it pointed out that we were overusing the exclamation "Geez!" Coming up with fresh exclamations that don't stick out is a tough part of conventional super-hero dialoguing, because most people don't really have all that many different ways of expressing the sort of surprise super-hero characters tend to encounter on virtually every page of their two-dimensional lives. But we had to keep working at it to make sure the exclamations we were using didn't become a distraction to the stories we were telling.

8. Make sure the characters are reacting to each other.

Pay attention to ebb and flow, the rhythm of your dialogue, so that what one character says leads logically and smoothly to the next character's response. Make sure it's an actual conversation in which the people hear each other and react accordingly (unless, of course, they're supposed to be ignoring each other).

9. Remember that we don't always communicate what's on our minds in so many words.

People lie, speak sarcastically, avoid the subject, ask rhetorical questions, joke, exaggerate and otherwise tip their feelings in hundreds of ways besides just speaking their minds out-right. Keep an eye out for this kind of thing in real life and work your observations into the dialogue you write. Giving the reader an innovative and true-to-life way to glean information from the dialogue will bring credibility and new energy to your story.

And that's what dialogue is all about, communicating lots of information in imaginative ways, so the audience forgets you're presenting a work of fiction and starts hearing in your dialogue the compelling voices of real, flesh-and-blood people.

contact Tom at
tombierbaum@bluelinepro.com

6 TIPS FROM SIZER FOR BETTER DESIGNED Comics

by Paul Sizer

Ever hear the phrase "God is in the details"? Well, while I can't prove that statement, I can prove a slight alteration of that statement; "Good comic design is in the details". While not everyone has huge budgets to produce the books they do, there are simple rules of composition and typography that can help any book look more professional. Since I'm responsible for all the elements that go into LITTLE WHITE MOUSE, I'm very attentive to making sure there are as few mistakes as possible that will make the book look less than professional. I've divided up my tips this article into two categories: typographic tips and compositional tips. Obviously, there are a million ways to produce comic art and my ways may not fit your style, but I've tried to focus on pretty fundamental techniques that cross all stylistic boundaries. Enough talking about it, let's get tipping!

TIP #1
BEWARE THE WIDOW!

Typographically, any time a paragraph or block of text has only one word in it's last line, that single word is called a "widow". This is a big type no-no. Besides looking sloppy, it also creates a huge empty space beneath the paragraph that visually disturbs the flow of text. In Example A, I've shown a caption box that has a widow. Because most text in comic books exists in either caption boxes or word balloons that have lines around them, this makes the dead space after the widow even more noticeable. My preference for dealing with this problem is to central-justify my text in boxes and balloons. Much of the time, this gives more options for making your text fit comfortably into your space, as seen in Example B.

I WANTED THE SCENE THEY WOULD SEE WHEN THEY CAME INTO THE ROOM TO *STICK* IN THEIR HEADS FOR A *LONG TIME.*

Example A WIDOW!

I WANTED THE SCENE THEY WOULD SEE WHEN THEY CAME INTO THE ROOM TO *STICK* IN THEIR HEADS FOR A *LONG TIME.*

Example B

TIP # 2
BEWARE OF STRETCH MARKS!

When type is designed, it has a certain balance and ratio in the thick and thin strokes that make up each letter. This ratio of thick and thin gives each letter its visual stability and readability. When people stretch type in the computer to make it fit into a space they destroy the integrity of the letterform, which makes the letters unbalanced, hard to read and really unprofessional. Just because you can do something on your computer doesn't mean you should! One area I notice this infraction occurring most is in sound effects, where tons of attention is placed on the action itself, while a really badly created sound effect makes the whole thing look amateurish. In Example C, I've created a "WHAM!", keeping the integrity of the letter forms as the font was designed. In Example D, I wanted a more condensed version of the WHAM, so I just stretched type to make it more compressed. Notice how bad the type looks, especially how the cross strokes in the middle

WHAM!

Example C

WHAM!

Example D

of the H and A are now thicker then that the other strokes of the letterform. If you want a more condensed version for type, use a condensed font (Example E), one that's designed to be condensed, rather than stretching and screwing up a non-condensed face.

Example E

TIP #3
### WATCH WHERE YOU'RE POINTING THOSE BALLOONS!

This may seem like a pretty obvious tip, but you'd be surprised how many times, mostly when someone is making their word balloons in the computer, that the placement of balloons is really awful, especially the pointer of the balloon that directs it to the person speaking. This is a subtle tip, but it really makes a difference! Notice in Example F where the pointer of the balloon is going into the girl's hair. Yes, it's pointing to the person speaking, but it looks awkward and sloppy. Example G has a much better placement of the balloon's pointer. I try to have the pointer aimed directly at the speaker's mouth when possible,
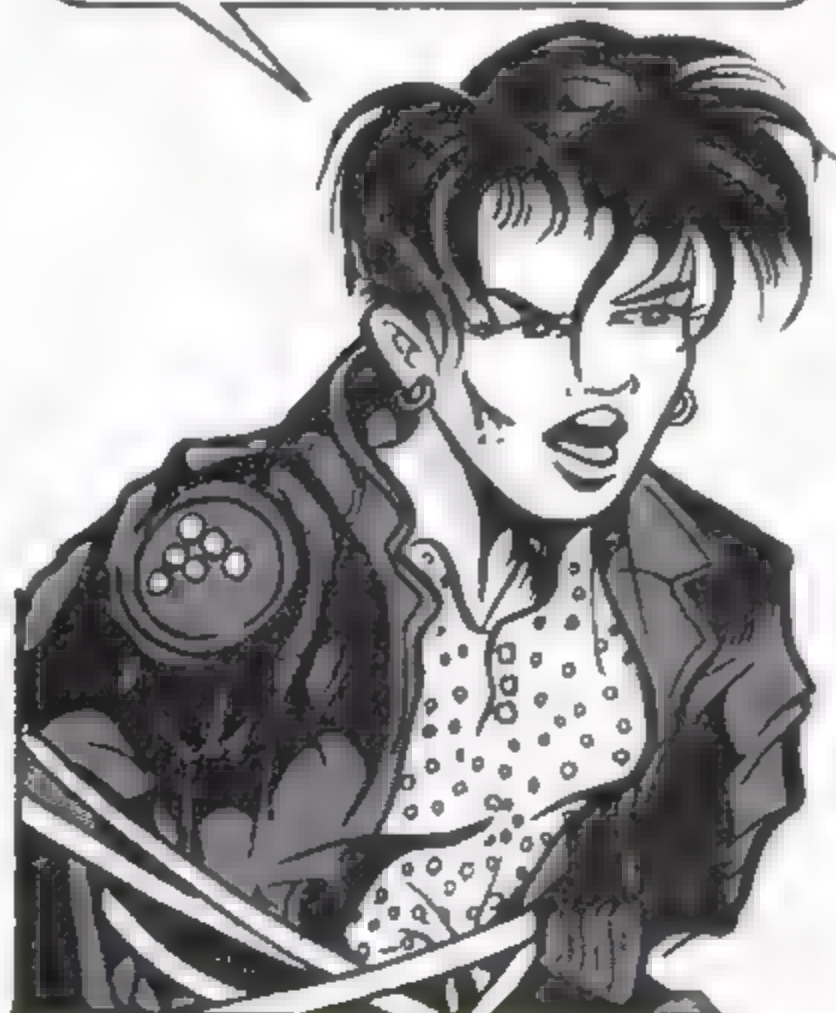
Example F

Example G

even if the pointer isn't right next to the speaker's mouth. This placement also makes better use of the empty dead space behind the girl's head, rather than obscuring or overlapping the artwork. Again, an attention to detail that will make your lettering look more professional.

TIP #4
LET THOSE FORMS BREATHE!

The axiom that "Less is More" is very true in comics, and one that all comic artists need to remember. I constantly ask myself whether or not I can simplify a drawing and give it more impact. In my experience, over-rendering things like clothing and hair make the drawing look muddy and cluttered. Any time I can make a simple form work, the overall composition benefits. In Example H, I wanted to emphasize the angularity of the leather jacket to make it more imposing, so I decided to leave the shape of the jacket fairly simple and just render a few select highlights on the jacket that would further emphasize the angular aspects of it. Notice that I've also broken up the light and dark areas of the composition to better frame the figure. Going from hair, face, jacket/dress, legs to boots, it goes dark/light/dark/light/dark, helping to give both the top and bottom of the figure some emphasis and weight. Also, especially when drawing a female form, less lines and rendering make things more

smooth, youthful and feminine. Too much cross-hatching on females makes them appear older. Learning to simplify and imply (rather than over-do) the musculature of your females will give them an overall sleeker and more natural look.

TIP #5
DON'T LOSE YOUR LINES IN THE DARK!

In Example I, we see a portion of a scene with a large shadow being cast over a human figure, two robots and the back corner and wall. To maintain the integrity of the foreground and midground figures and to keep the whole composition from becoming a dark, soupy visual mess, I've used a couple of simple lighting techniques. Where the figures intersect the shadow, I usually place a thin white "halo" line around the figures to help them stand out from the shadow areas. Because I also wanted to keep the perspective of the room evident, so I could show that the shadow was falling across different surfaces, I maintained thin open lines where the
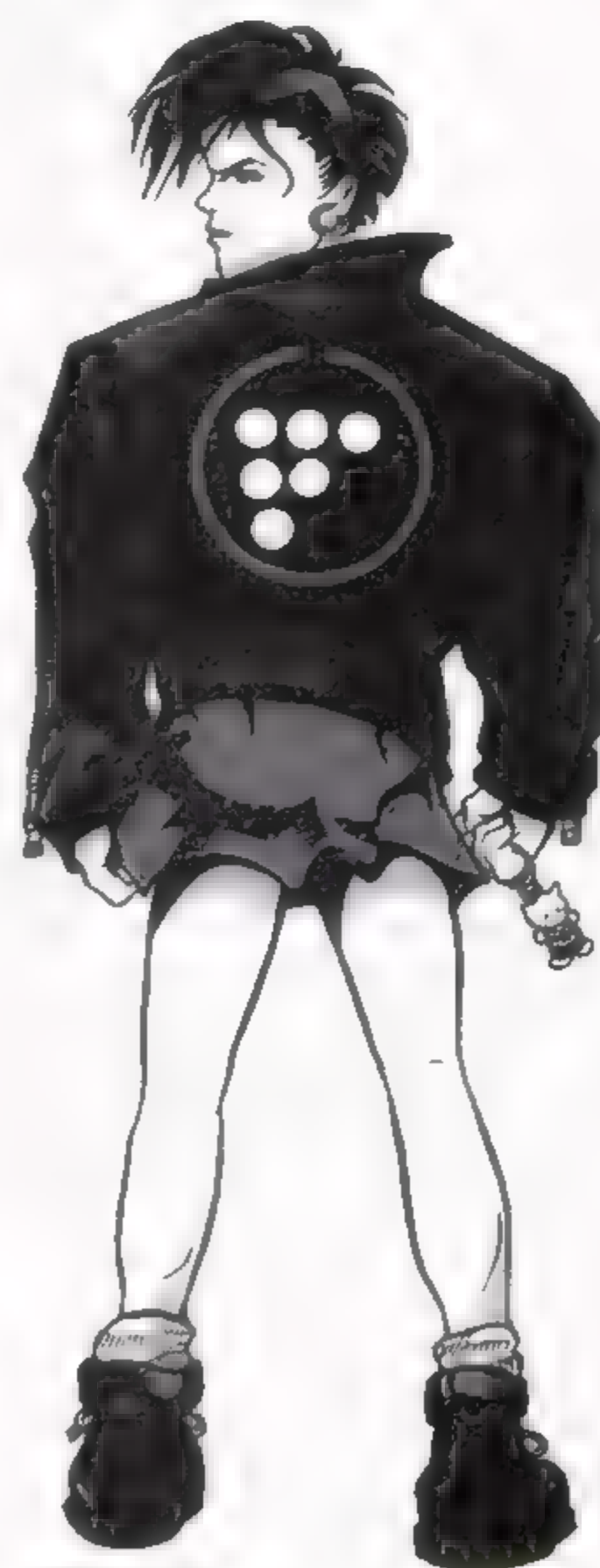
Example H

Example I

the center of the action and orienting your force lines from that central point. You're actually establishing that "impact point" as a floating vanishing point, but rather than having it define the perspective of the background, you're using it to draw the eye to the action center of the panel. I like to show action just a fraction of a second after it's occurred, so in Example J the impact point converges where the guy's face was when Filthy Jake hit him, allowing the blow to radiate out from that point. Debris, teeth, bodily fluids, whatever can use that impact point as a perspective point to be based upon.

Well, those are my tips for now. Some of them may seem really subtle and unnoticeable, but if you are showing your work to other professionals in your portfolio, attention to these kinds of details can make all the difference to someone looking to hire you. And remember, as I'm bringing my design training to my comic work, bring your area of interest to your specialty. Knowledge of color, experience with options offered through computers, styles of literature; all of these things will give you the edge to compete in the always-changing industry of comics.

contact Paul at
paulsizer@bluelinepro.com
check out Paul's comic book at
www.littlewhitemouse.com

ceiling and walls come together so that the perspective that shows the dimension of the room doesn't get lost in the shadow area. Most of the time, it's the inker's job to decide how to deal with effects like this to visually organize the dark areas of a composition and make the proper things come forward in the panel. The penciller can also help by composing the piece to eliminate any confusing black/black areas between figures and backgrounds.
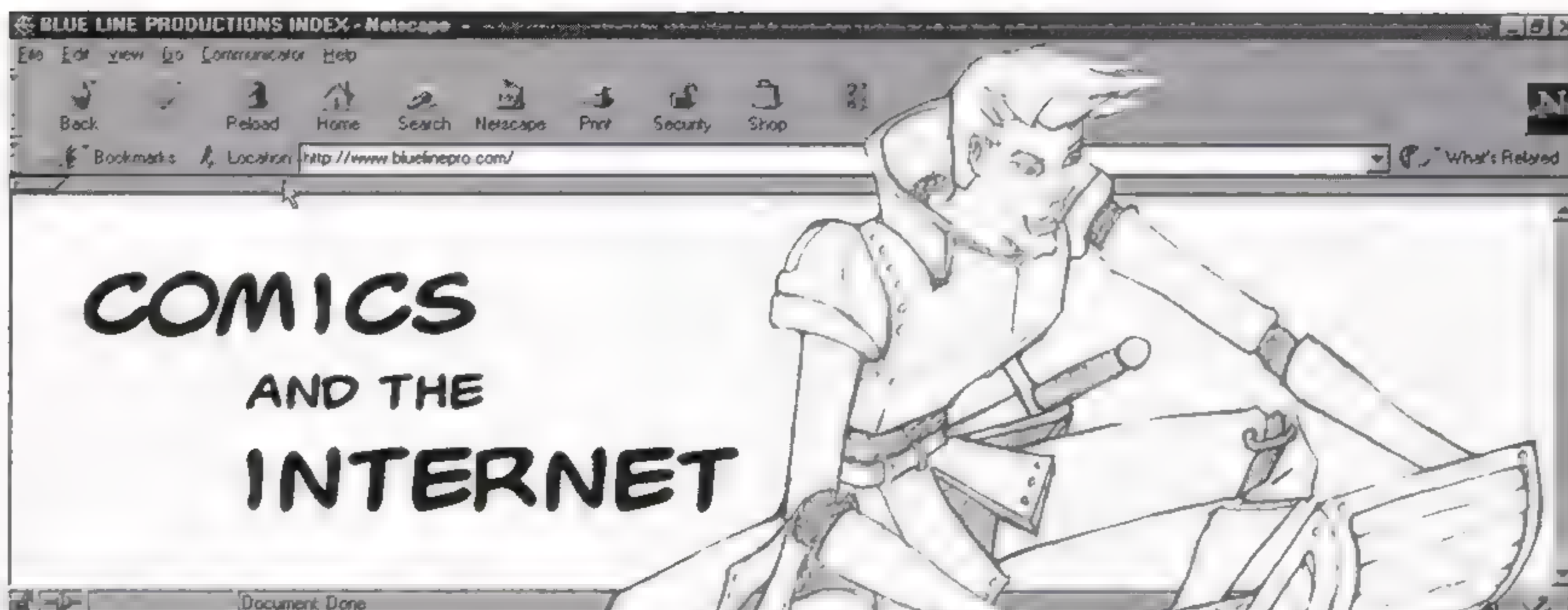
TIP #6
FIND YOUR VANISHING IMPACT POINT!

This is actually a pointer I picked up from studying manga. You can really emphasize the impact of a punch, explosion or blast by finding

Example J

COMICS
AND THE
INTERNET

eComics:
Show me the Money

by Mike Maydak

We already summarized and overviewed what an e-comic is, as well as their typical formats. Now it's time to move on to something of more interest - how to make your creation make you money with e-comics. The idea of e-comics (and most other forms of digitized media) is still relatively new, and the process in which they are distributed is in its infancy at best. The possible ways discussed in this article are just one of the roads that e-comic regulation and distribution could take. Most likely, the whole process of making e-comics a viable marketing area will be a combination of ideas from all across the industry. No one can really tell how the future will play out.

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of e-comics, it is important to keep in mind what type of hardware and software will be used with them. Right now, there are two types of platforms.

First there is actual reader software for computers. These viewers, such as Microsoft Reader and Adobe Acrobat eBook Reader, are easily available via free download off the net. They are much like any other graphic viewing program used on your computer, but are designed and laid out especially for viewing e-books, including features like turn page and book mark.

The second platform is actual e-book readers. Just swinging by the local Circuit City you can see that they are available to the general public.

Current models for eBooks include the RCA eBook REB1200 (color) and the smaller REB1100 (monochrome). They include some nice features. Backlit screens and a 480 x 640 display makes for a nice picture. An internal modem allows downloading of eBooks possible though phone lines. The RCA eBook has the option to expand its memory to carry up to 80,000 pages. What that means for its ability and capacity for the graphic files of comics is yet to be seen. The current retail value of these models is bit out of reach for the common consumer, but they are bound to drop in price once the market has other competitive manufacturers involved. At the time I'm writing this article the eBooks for the RCA readers were offered exclusively though Gemstar. That will be something that has to change for this market to grow.

There are designs by various other companies in the works. N-Vision Technology (www.nvisiontek.com) has a two-screen device with a book like feel in development. However, initial research indicates that it looks to be more like a PC laptop alternative, but is promising with its many flexible features and compatibility with other computer platforms.

Between the software programs and the e-books, will either one of these platforms phase out the other when it comes to e-comics? The RCA designs skip over the use of computers and the Internet by making access to eBooks only through the phone line. This was done due to the security issues involved with going though the Internet. Even with these piracy concerns, it's more likely the future of these platforms will merge and become more than just an electronic book reader. Think of them as a portable link to the information highway, where downloading this week's comics is just one of their features. Wireless Internet is already feasible, making their convenience wonderful. Kind of like a laptop with a personality. Something you can neatly tuck into your backpack or briefcase to pull out later when work or school gets dull.

Who knows the possibilities the upcoming technology can bring to the comics picture? But there is a problem. What is the biggest hang up to getting eBooks/eComics rolling?

Simple.

Security.

Without a good method of security, sales and distribution will be at a stand still. Why would someone pay for a file if they knew they could just hack it or find it someplace free on the net? The recent experiment done by Stephen King further proved the aspect of human nature of getting something for nothing. Though near everybody is guilty of that sentiment, it's the root of piracy.

Recently, a few Internet security companies have developed their own programs to secure the transfer and use of digitized media files. Some of the best

security for e-books requires verification codes to open the e-book file. This code is verified at the site where the e-book is acquired, making sure the copy registers as a purchased e-book. Problem is, like the eBook readers; they are expensive to set up due to research and development cost. The setup fees for any publisher, independent or not, would be very high at the beginning, making getting yourself electronically published securely easier said then done. This leads us into some possible ways to avoid these huge costs and getting your work out there and making money for you.

One of these concepts with e-comics is what I call the "Advertising Pack". The idea is that the comic will be free but will have advertising logos and links merged with it. Advertisers would be gathered by an ad agent or yourself, and you would let them post their ads across the top, side, and bottom of your online comic, for a *"small fee"* of course. In essence, advertisers would be paying for the whole bill and with that whatever profits from the venture. The plus to this is that piracy is not an issue. Actually, it would be, in a way, encouraged. The higher the circulation out there the better you look to potential advertisers, thus leading into landing more advertisers. The drawback to all this is actually acquiring advertising. This is not a problem for the big time publishers who have their name out there already. The Marvels and DCs would not have too difficult a time at this. The problem would arise for the independent creators and publishers. I'm no expert, but I learned that it's not easy to convince people to pour money in advertising on something relatively new and untested. It's a vicious catch-22. Companies won't advertise if they don't see results and high circulation, and you can't show results or get a high circulation if you don't have ads and the money that comes with it. They are not going to line up at your door and hand you a check, you have to go after them, and then after them some more. For an independent publisher, this can be a chore. I am not saying a creator shouldn't be involved in selling his or her book, far from it. It is just that effort directed toward advertising may take away your own efforts on the product you want to create and sell. If you were to take this route, then the best option would be to let an ad agent handle all of this work. You

would lose some of the profits in form of a percentage, but in the long run it would save your sanity.

The second way would lend itself more to an independent creator. Similar to an online comic store, this concept involves a site that would store e-comics like a warehouse of sorts. The creator would come to the site and simply register and put his book in stock for some regulated fee. The "warehouse" would sell copies of the e-comic to customers browsing the site, splitting the fee between the creator and itself. This way the web-site would openly promote all of its e-comics, since it's in the site's best interest, lessening the need for advertising. It would still be best if you promoted yourself in addition. The more the name is out there, the better. This would open up the playing field tremendously in the amount of selection with comics. Anyone could make a comic and offer it to the public. The comic would have exposure in other cases that it would have not. You might think this might lead to a lot of sub-par comics being published? This may be true, but the reader reserves the right of what he purchases. There is a lot of great talent out there that never gets the chance it deserves. The key would be in selecting the right e-comic stores to promote his or her book. You would want to make sure they have your best interest in mind and at the same time make capital. The drawback to all this would be the cyber-nuisance of piracy. As stated before, new technologies are making this problem less of a problem. Nothing is fail safe though. Hackers are always cracking the newest security measures. The solution to piracy lies with the e-comic store being in constant awareness of hackers, and what they are doing to crack their system They would have to stay on top of their security program, updating it constantly.

Another possible way that could emerge would be a clone of Napster that deals with graphic files for e-comics. A recent article of the net I read about stated Napster clones were being made and are a reality as we speak. As I see it, Napster in its current form won't be around for much longer. The free

distribution of copyrighted material is something the corporate media giants of the world won't stand for. Due to its popularity, Napster is something hard to take down. I see media companies joining with Napster in a partnership. If you can't beat them, join them. Taking it a step further, media companies will likely create their own Napster-like software and skip the middleman all together, adjusting the program and formats to their own particular needs. This form would be better news, well, at least for the creators. The general layout of the program itself is excellent for any media transfer over the Internet. The sheer convenience of it is wonderful. With a hypothetical "Comic Book Napster", if somebody had a whim to read Incredible Hulk #53, they could with a stroke of the keyboard. All they have to do is register a credit card or some form of electronic payment with the eComic transfer program to pay for their eComics. The key would lie with transforming the program, in that all transfers were regulated and copyright material got its share for every download.
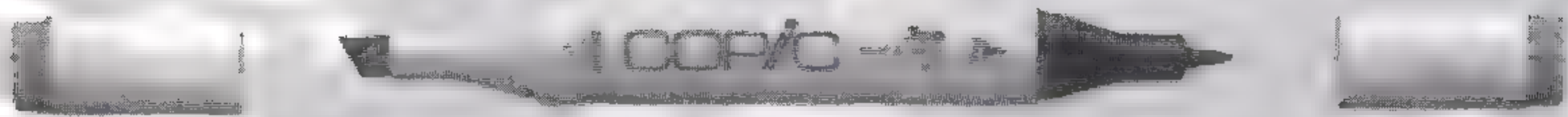
So we know what E-comics are and what the future may hold for them. What's left? Of course! How the heck to make the things? In Sketch #8, we are going to dive straight into the technical jargon jungle of converting your comic and creating an e-comic out of it. Don't miss it.

M^2

eBook Reader by RCA REB1200

COPIC's Double V's

Versatility and Variety

You may ask, "What is the need for colored markers these days? We have digital coloring." True, the work done by digital colorists is very impressive and may require less time than traditional coloring processes, and unlike a marker, a mistake can be easily erased with the click of a mouse. But have you ever closely examined a piece of color artwork rendered by hand, with the experienced touch of an artist versed in fine marker technique? These pieces sometimes seem so much richer and full of life than their digital counterparts. Though he may not use markers, the work of Alex Ross is an excellent example of the beautiful hand crafted "old school" illustration I'm thinking of.

When it comes to using markers I'm not talking about your everyday waterproof Corola Markers, but rather some of the top of the line professional markers in the industry. I'm talking about quality tools like Prismacolor, and particularly in this review, COPIC brand markers.

COPIC Markers have been widely used in Europe and Asia, mainly Japan, where their coloring qualities go hand in hand with the style we know as manga. Their versatility and variety lends itself to the imagination of the creator, giving them many options for their creative style.

What makes the COPIC marker stand out from the rest of the market is truly their incredible versatility. There are three different types of COPIC markers: the standard square designed COPIC, the oval designed COPIC Sketch markers, and the COPIC Multi-Liner. The first two are double-ended. All three types are fast drying and come in a great range of colors with hues such as mauve shadow, pine tree green, and africano. COPICs have been specially formulated with a toner formulated to not dissolve their colors that lets the user work directly onto photocopied surfaces while providing clear unblemished color.

The standard COPIC marker body has a fine tip and broad tip nib. These are interchangeable, with COPIC offering nine additional nibs for greater freedom of technique in marker rendering. The nibs are available in replacement packs, usually around 10 per container. Standard COPICS are available in 218 vibrant colors with a wide selection of invaluable gray scale gradients, 44 to be exact.

COPIC sketch markers have an oval body profile, giving you the feel of a fast flowing creative experience in your hands. They paint as well as they draw. These tools come with a broad nib and a brush like nib, available in medium, broad, and super brush, and are great for delicate or bold expression. These are perfect for many advertising fields that comic artists sometimes work in, such as fashion, graphics, and fine art lettering and calligraphy. COPIC sketch markers are available in 286 colors and are refillable with standard COPIC inks. Their nibs are interchangeable as well.

The third type of COPICs is the multi Liner, and they are available in both pen and brush. The drawing pens allow work wonderfully without annoying running ink. The pens come in a wide range of line widths, from .05 to 1.0 mm, while the brushes come in three different sizes: small, medium, and large.

One of the best parts about COPIC markers, standard and sketch, is their refillable ink feature. No more tossing away dried out markers. Just fill the marker back up and you're ready to go. Refills can be used up to six times. This refillable feature gives you the opportunity to make your own custom color through mixing inks, creating an original color all your own.

As with other brands of markers, COPIC markers can be incorporated with your airbrush by inserting the broad end of the marker into a specifically designed adapter. Airbrushing is very useful for creating backgrounds and filling in larger areas. There is relatively no mess and the change in color is instant. Using markers for airbrushing drains them quickly, and the ability to conveniently refill your COPIC will save you time, money, and that awful moment when your last marker runs dry in mid-project at 2:00 AM. Now you don't have to fight to get that last critical bit of color out of your dying marker, or wait 'til the following morning when the art store finally opens to get a new one - not to mention hoping the store has the marker color you need in stock!

Individual COPIC markers, including the sketch variety, generally run about five dollars a piece. The COPIC multiliners cost about half that, depending on where they are obtained. Sets run about the same when broken down to the single marker. Replacement inks run about five dollars as well. Replacement nibs come in packs of 10 (excluding the brush nibs which come in packs of 3), and vary in price according to type. COPICS are can be obtained though www.copicmarker.com or though the Blue Line Pro catalog.

But are they worth the extra money compared to, let's say, Prismacolor? Through my observations when comparing the two, I'd have to say that COPIC is one step above its competitor in quality. The color just seemed a tad brighter and their handling gave me a better feel for them. Don't get me wrong, Prismalcolor is an excellent brand. But if you're looking for the best - or darn near to it - in the tools for marker rendering, then I would have to say COPIC is the brand you want to go with.

Remember though, just because you have nice equipment for the job it doesn't mean the work is going to turn out fantastic. As with all mediums it takes skill and practice to become efficient and effective in the tool's use. If you rely solely on the makers themselves, the work will fair no better then that in a first grade crayon coloring contest.
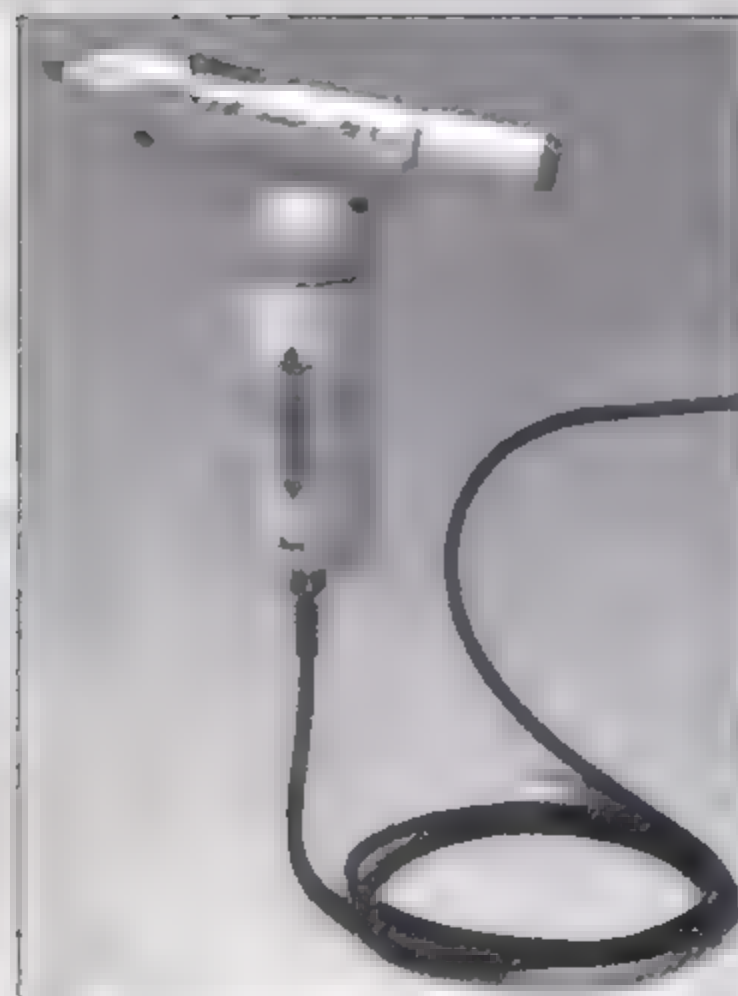
COPIC Marker Airbrush
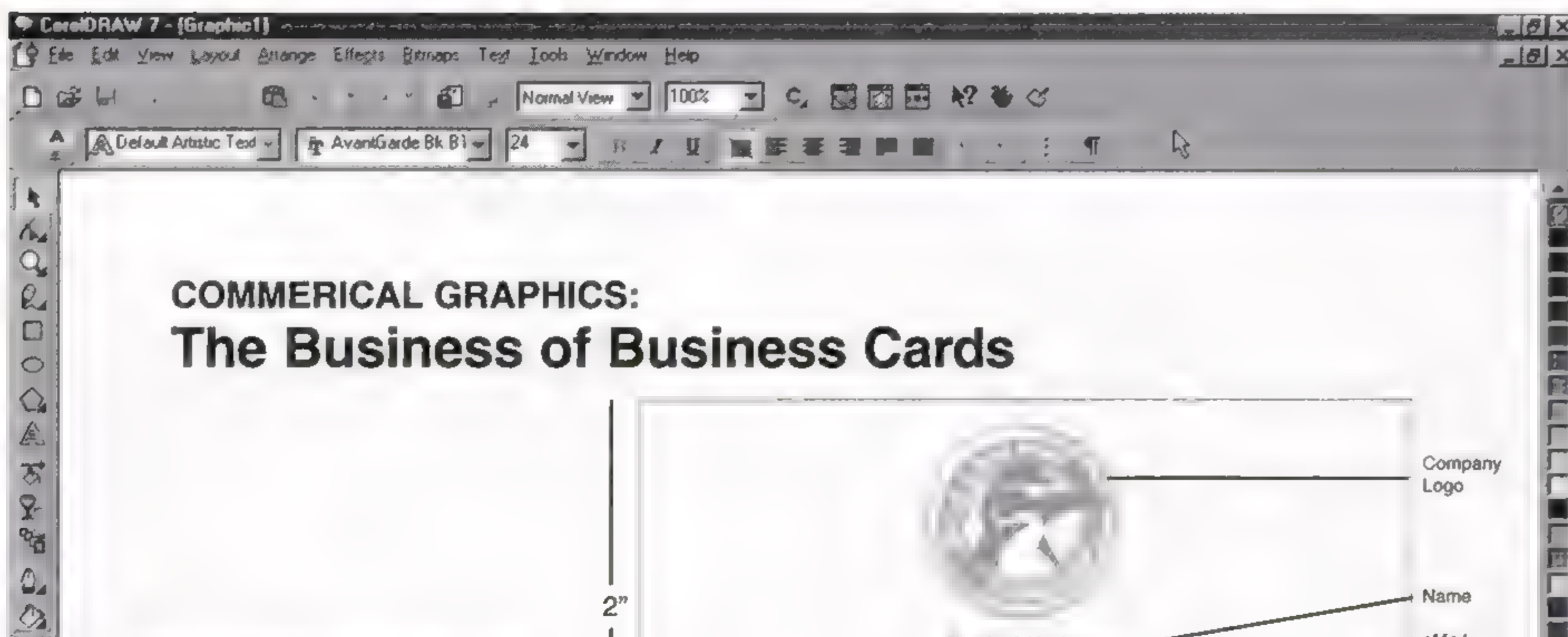

Replacable Marker Tips
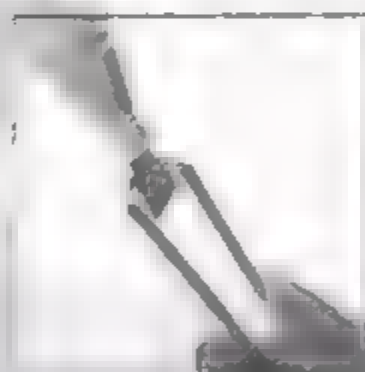
Changing Tips are as easy as 1..2..3

Refill your Marker with COPICS Various ink. Simple and clean.

COPIC Clear Blender Marker

COMMERICAL GRAPHICS:
The Business of Business Cards

Company Logo

Name

Bob Hickey

eMail

Address

BLUE LINE PRO COMICS

Phone, Fax

Web site

Affiliation

2"

3½"

When you finish your comic book, you're going to want - and need - to send comp copies of your work around, in hopes of getting some free publicity. Places like the local newspapers and TV stations, as well as news publications specializing in the comics industry, are all places you want to send samples of your creation. You are probably going to swap information with other publishers or creators at social and business events as well, especially at conventions. What you are going to need is an easy and affordable way to give the many people you meet all your important contact information in a straight-to-the-facts manner. This is where the art form of the business card comes into play.

Business cards have been around for a long time, and they're as important as ever, even in the world of computers and electronic information exchange. I can't think of a time since I've been out of art school that I haven't had a business card in my pocket ready to give to someone. As I look back over the years and many business adventures, I've had to design quite a number of different business cards. In that process I had to learn the most important thing about them, and that's getting all the proper information on the card in a clear and attractive manner. Fancy stock and embossing are nice, but it's not how creative or flashy the card looks - the most essential aspect of your card should be who you are and what your purpose is, so somebody digging through their wallet a month after you meet them knows why they kept your card.

With your purpose in mind, there are some main elements that go into a business card:

1. Your name

You might think this is a no-brainer, but I have received many business cards with the company name and logo but no mention of the necessary contact person. I might remember the face of the person that gave me the card, but I might not have a clue as to their name – depending on the business at hand, this could prove to be awkward and time-consuming. While I do carry cards that have only my business information and not my name, I only give those out to customers who need to talk to the order division or customer service of the business, and not necessarily me. When a chance meeting comes up that I have only those particular cards on me, I will always write my name of them if I need to give them to publishers or creators that would want to talk to me. As many more people seem to rely entirely on their technology, I find that in the comic book business and its related fields it never hurts to have that fully charged pen or marker close to you.

2. Your address

This can be your business/studio address or your web address, or both. It's whatever you prefer, and you can

create a number of different cards for particular contact purposes that contain specific information if you choose. You need to give your contacts access to you in case they want to contact you by mail or need to send you something like samples or parcels through a delivery service.

3. Your phone/e-mail

These days this may be even more important then the mailing address. You never know where this card may end up? A newspaper or magazine may want to get hold of you to do an article about you and your project.

4. Your artwork

"But what about my card graphic?" you ask – "It's comics! I need an illustration!" Well naturally, if you can include a piece of artwork then do so - this is a sequential art form after all, and a graphic representation of you and your art or business can be a great eye-catcher. A graphic piece can be a terrific addition; however, I don't consider it a wholly necessary ingredient for a successful card. Many people over-emphasize their card art. Don't crowd or reduce the very important text information on your business card just to frivolously add some cool graphics. When including graphic art on your card, be sure to consider the following:

Logos are a very nice addition, some people consider them a prerequisite as long as they can be "read" and are very clean in design. They act as a symbol for you and your company and should be used to trigger interest in the purpose of your card.

Layouts should be carefully thought out. As with any graphic situation, they can add immeasurably to the impact of the card, or mar and detract from it. You should experiment with some roughs, do a variety of thumbnail compositions. What will work best for you and the comic or company you're representing, what stands for "you"? It might help if you think of the entire card, and not just the logo or art, as a tiny bulletin board for yourself. Depending on what is being represented, nothing is too wild as long as it is attractive and legible. You could even try turning the card around and make it look like the front of your comic book. This may make it a little harder to read when stuck in a business card holder, but if it looks cool and not cluttered then the person keeping it won't mind. and will hopefully keep checking it out

Try to use both sides of your card. This costs more in printing, but could give you a way to include artwork without make everything a two-point typeface.

Again, take your time in roughing out your card and considering various compositions. And if you're printing something beyond a basic black-and-white card, you'd be wise to try your roughs in color. Color can be a very critical factor here. Just as when working on an individual comic panel, keep in mind the relatively small size of the card and which elements, if any, that are going to be "punched up." Care in the rough stage can make the difference between your card being kept... or keeping company, probably with a wad of chewed gum (at best) in the bottom of your hoped-for contact's garbage can.

Don'ts...

1. Don't set your typeface so small that you have trouble reading it when printed. Very importantly, you should check with your printer and see if they automatically thermograph the printed area. Thermographing is a printing process that uses a chemical in the ink to raise the image that is to be printed. This speeds up the drying process so that printers can cut the cards as soon as they come off the press. However, it will slightly fatten the printed image, so you'll want to allow for this during your design planning.

2. Don't change the size of the card. Unless you're trying something really funky (and prepared to absorb the time and cost of possibly having to redo your card in a more effective fashion if your experiment fails), a 2x3 1/2-inch card is the standard. Not only will a non-traditionally sized card probably cost you more money to have printed, but many people will be unable to carry your card around with them. Most cardholders, day timers, etc. are made specifically to carry cards based on the standard size. If they don't fit they won't stay around very long.

Finally, here's a very useful tip: Some of those ads make it seem like a home computer is the answer to all of your business needs, but a number of entrepreneurs, comic book and otherwise, have been unpleasantly surprised to discover this particular twist from their new home super system: If you decide to print your business card on your computer, don't plan on carrying them around in your pocket. Your computer printer prints with a different kind of ink than a print shop uses. While carrying them around the cards will smudge, stick together, and get dirty far more quickly than the cards you have done by a conventional, professional business printer.

You've been warned. After all, after you read Sketch, we want the only stains on your fingers to be from the black ink you're pleasantly surrounded in when "doing your books". Good luck with your cards, we hope to receive many of them during the upcoming convention season.

the BOOK CORNER

HOW TO DRAW MANGA #1
By Ben Dunn, Fred Perry and
Adam Warren.
Published by Antarctic Press
$4 95 Comic Format 32 pg.
(Available in 3 Covers)

Manga. What does it mean? Where did it come from? How did it come to be? These are just a few of the questions that are answered on the first page alone in the Antartic Press book How to Draw Manga #1, the first installment of an ongoing series. This issue gives an excellent beginning overview on the world of manga.

How to Draw Manga #1 is the result of the collaboration of three experienced manga artists: Ben Dunn, Fred Perry and Adam Warren. Each shares some healthy advice and techniques, with their particular style, on the different aspects of manga though a plethora of pencil renderings.

Dunn covers the basic anatomy of characters, showing the male and female differences in the style of manga. Dunn also does a step by step in creating faces and a full-fledged character with details.

Perry builds on Dunn's ideas by walking though drawing specific body parts such as the hand or the foot. In addition, Perry shares with the readers manga concepts such as the line of action, and how the reaction of an object shows the force

Adam Warren wraps the issue up with his take on construction of a page, character composition, and how to give your characters a sense of perspective with their body architecture.

Overall, this is a good and nicely priced book to pick up, even if you have marginal interest in manga. As a comic artist it is always refreshing to look at the ways a different style is done. This book is a brief but enjoyable overview of manga, perfect for people that are interested in understanding the form or considering adopting that style. If you're looking for a quick,

smart run though manga, this is a great book for you to pick up. It has plenty of great illustrations, good information, is reasonably priced, and done by people that have plenty of experience in the manga field. Ben Dunn has been doing fun-filled and wild manga material for ages, he's been doing cool giant robots since his early days at Eclipse comics! If you're interested in manga you should check out listings for Ben's Antartic Press. Adam Warren is currently writing Gen: 13, but his great Dirty Pair stuff, from its Eclipse Comics days to its current runs from Dark Horse, is some of the best drawn and enjoyably written American manga-flavored comic material you can pick up – hilarious, clever, and beautifully executed (although it may be a bit racy for some of Sketch's very young audience - it's no Pokemon). If you're into anime and manga check out Adam's Dirty Pair, and be on the look out for more "how to manga" from the guys at Antarctic Press.
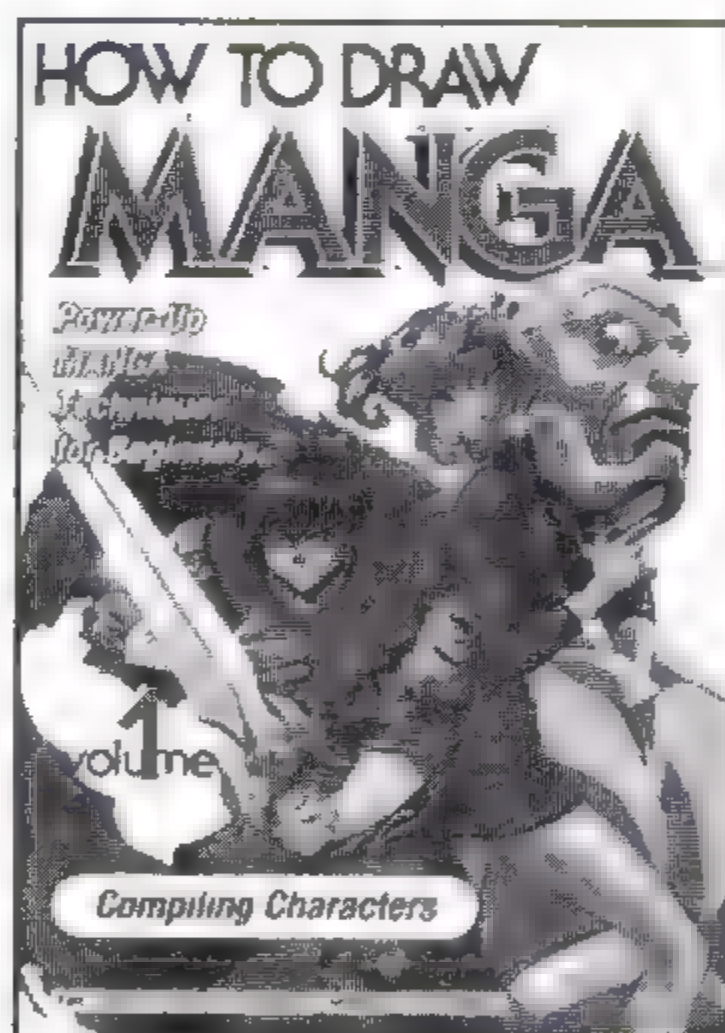
**HOW TO DRAW MANGA
VOLUME 1
Compiling Characters**
written and drawn by
Tatsuhiro Ozaki, Yu Kinutani,
by the Society for the Study of
Manga Techniques
distributed by
Japan Publications Trading Co., Ltd.
English version published by
Graphic-sha Publishing Co., Ltd.
$19.95 (approx) softcover with a
full color wrap

How to Draw Manga Volume1: Compiling Characters has been a popular reference book in Japan for years. Just recently the book as been translated so that English readers could

get a chance to gain the insight this book can offer.

Taking a quick glance though the pages, it's hard to decide where to start. Seemingly every page covers a different aspect of the traits of manga. These points are illustrated though 116 pages of black and white pencil sketches, inked artwork, and photographs. Throughout the book a cartoon version of a humorous young publisher pops up to narrate (and be used as an example by) some of the topics, providing comic relief for the technical side of the book.

The book is broken down into four parts, an intro and three chapters The introduction by Tatsudhiro Ozaki gives an extensive explanation of the tools needed for the job and how to use them. A comic style story about the young cartoon publisher covers the basic happenings of getting a manga comic done, and the pitfalls and dilemmas that can go along with it. Ozaki continues, with the aid of some of Yu Kinutani's artwork, to illustrate the technique of manga in the three chapters of the book.

Chapter 1 explains how to draw the face through the use of anatomy, structure and proportions. There are tips concerning the different facial expressions and the emotions that go along with them. This is followed by lessons that show how to draw the body. Geometric manikin figures illustrate how the body changes during movement and differing points of view. The book shows how to break down proportions of the stylized manga body in both overall figure work and specific close-up sections of some of the more intricate body parts such as the hand and foot. The book goes on to show how light and shadow aid you in adding the necessary air of realism to your manga art.

After covering the individual specifics of drawing the face and body, the book "fleshes out" the manga figures with clever touches of detail, giving them personality as well as helping to define the situation they are in. Basic principles of a story (theme, plot, etc.) are laid out, giving you a better understanding of what goes into a story line

This book does a good job of pointing out the features of manga that make it so special, things you may not be aware of at first. With this book to give you a closer look you realize what makes manga unique, and what gives the style its particular feel.

Most of the text has been translated into English (with the exception of some of the illustration copy), but page layout is different than what you might expect - if this is your first exposure to an import book of this kind you should keep in mind it was originally written for a Japanese audience, and that some things obviously differ between the American and Japanese reader. This book covers much of the same material as the similarly titled book from Antartic Press, but is a more extensive and comprehensive publication, geared to the more seriously intentioned artist then the casual weekend warrior manga penciler. A solid purchase at the $20 SRP.
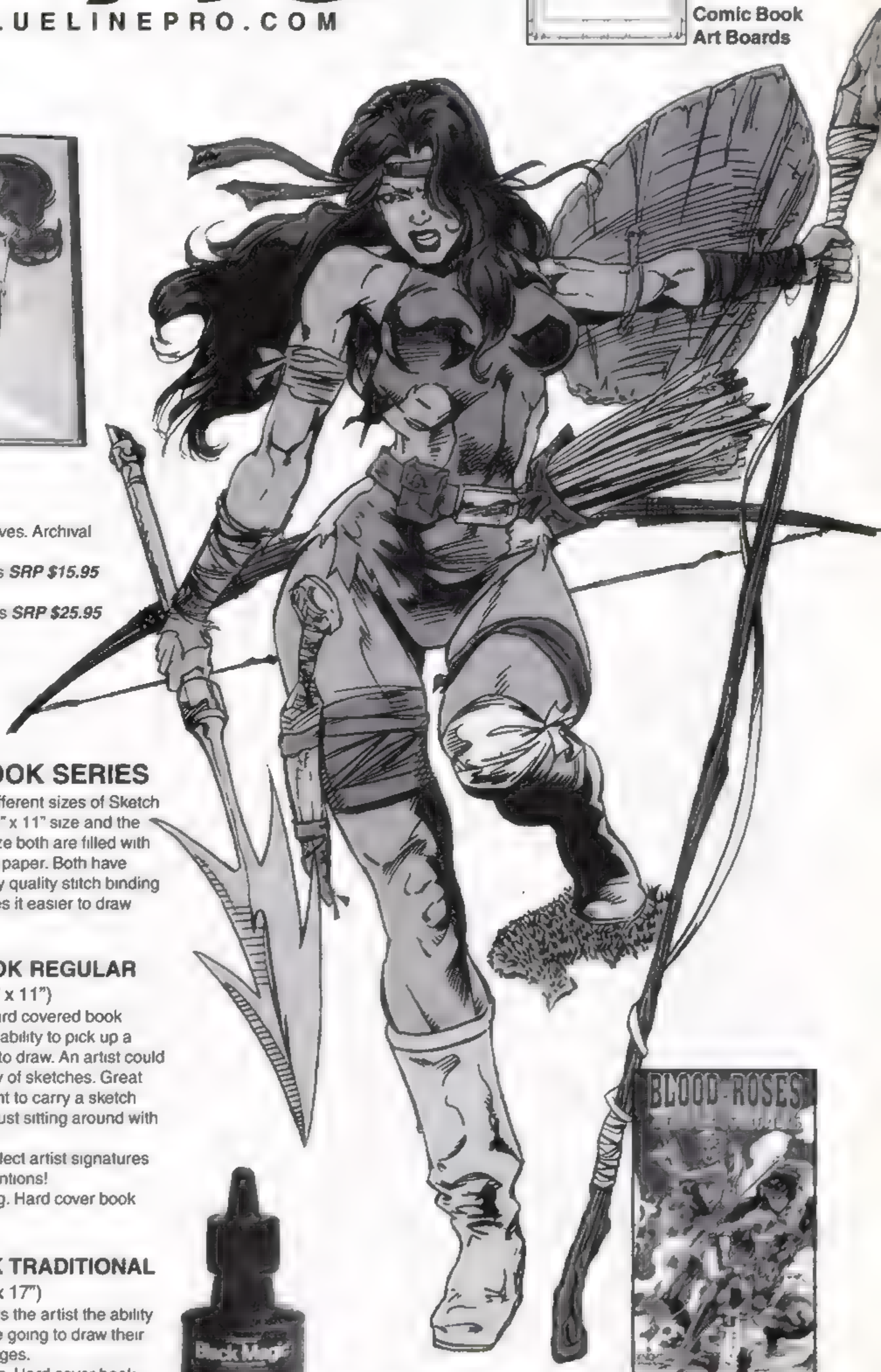
Blue Line Pro

WWW.BLUELINEPRO.COM

Comic Book
Art Boards

ARTFOLIOS

24 pages of acid, pvc, and legnen safe art sleeves. Archival
Safe.
- AR-IA1212 Artfolio Book 11 x 17 w/ 24 sheets *SRP $15.95*
(Holds Blue Line Comic Book Art Boards)
- AR-IA 1214 Artfolio book 14 x 17 w/ 24 sheets *SRP $25.95*
(Holds most oversized art boards)

BACK IN
STOCK !!

SKETCH BOOK SERIES

Blue Line offers two different sizes of Sketch
Books. A Regular 81/2" x 11" size and the
Traditional 11" x 17" size both are filled with
200 pages of 70 lb. art paper. Both have
hard covers with library quality stitch binding
for durability and makes it easier to draw
without an art table.

SKETCH BOOK REGULAR
(8 1/2" x 11")

This standard sized hard covered book
offers anyone with the ability to pick up a
pencil the opportunity to draw. An artist could
create their own library of sketches. Great
for when you don't want to carry a sketch
board around or your just sitting around with
your friends.
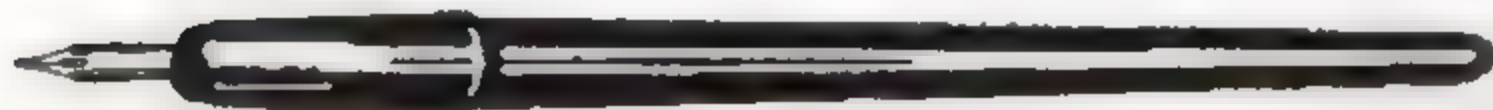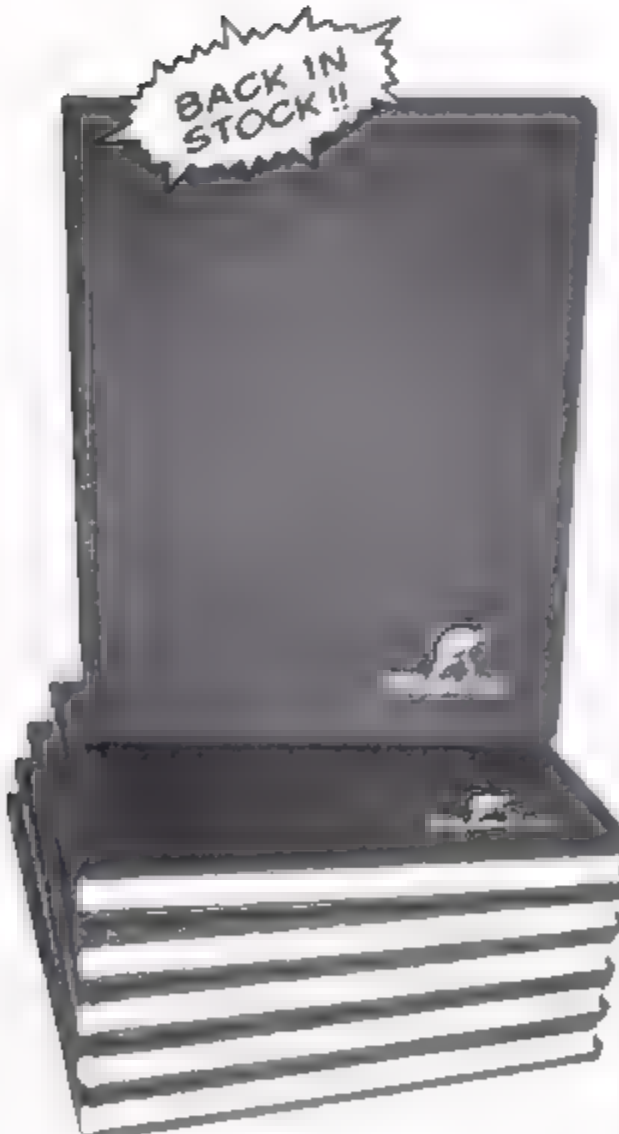Also a good way to collect artist signatures
and sketches at conventions!
Item #BL1010 / 200 pg. Hard cover book
SRP $24.95

DESIGN
Kneaded Rubber

SKETCH BOOK TRADITIONAL
(11" x 17")

This Sketch Book offers the artist the ability
to draw the size they're going to draw their
original comic book pages.
Item #BL1011 / 200 pg. Hard cover book
SRP $27.95

Black Magic

BLOOD-ROSES

BLOOD AND ROSES ADVENTURES Trade Paperback

Collects all four issues of the premiere Mini-Series, also includesover
50 pages of pin-ups, card art and other misc artwork...
Offering a new wrap around cover by Brad Gorby and Bob Hickey.
109 pages, B&W with a full-color cover
#CB1001 **Blood & Roses Trade Paperback vol.1**
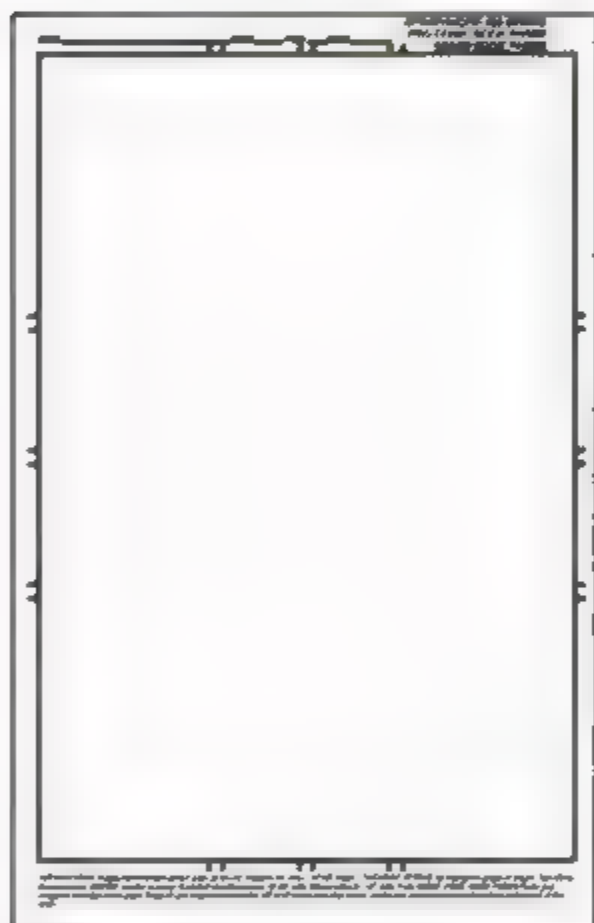first printing $12.95
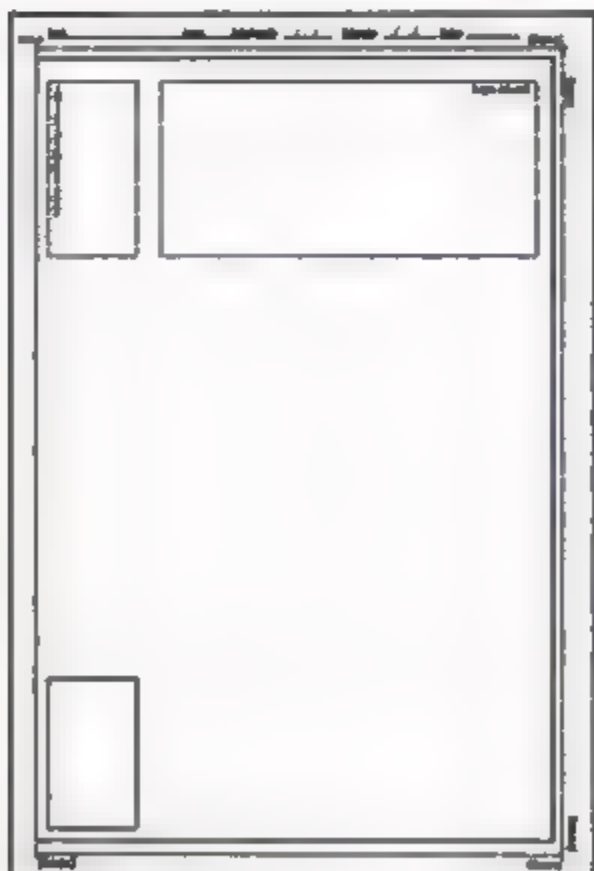
STRATHMORE COMIC BOOK BOARDS
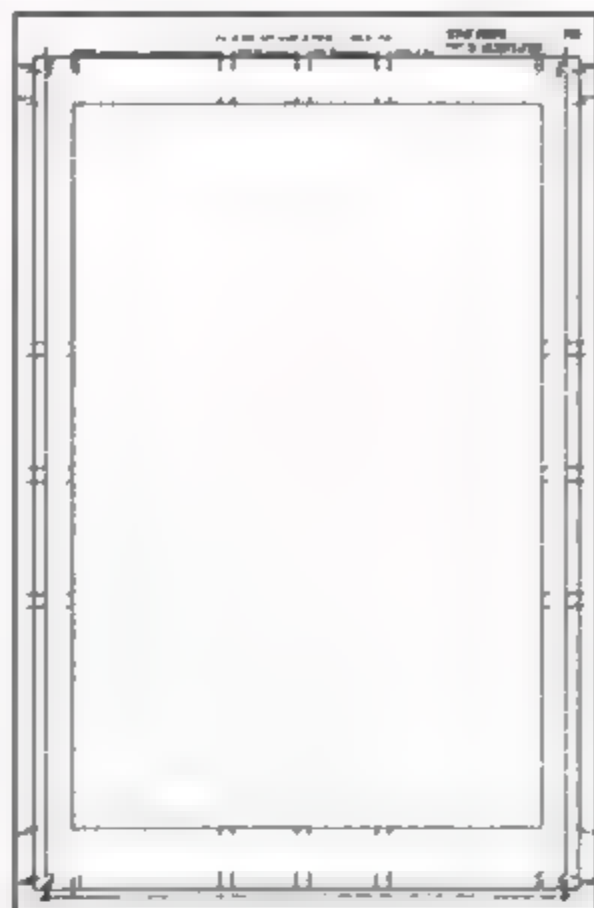
Full Trim Format Art Boards

PLY
Ply is the thickness of the paper A 2 ply paper has two pieces of paper pressed together and a 3 ply has 3 pieces of paper pressed together which is thicker than 2 ply.

Traditional Format Art Boards

Cover Sheets

Blue Line now offers comic artist an full trim comic book board to draw your comics. Just recently comic book publishers have been using full trim comic book boards to draw their comics. Blue Line has designed a full trim page that fits most requirements for full bleed comics, but can also be used to draw traditional comic book page formats. Special dotted borders helps the artist to keep the important illustrations within an area to be sure it's not lost to trimming.

PREMIERE300 (STRATHMORE)

300 Series Full Trim Format

PRO 300 Series Comic Book Boards is an economical heavy-weight paper. Like the rest of the Blue Line products the Pro 300 Series is preprinted with a non-photo blue border that allows the artist to draw comics the actual size that professionals do.

• **PRO 300 Series (SMOOTH)** surface is a 100lb. 100% acid free board. This Strathmore board is ideal for pen ink work and is also suited for pencil and marker.
- **ITEM#** BL1041 *SRP $17.00*
12 pages per pack
11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/bagged

• **PRO 300 Series (REGULAR)** toothy surface is a 100lb. 100% acid free board. This Strathmore board works well with pencils, charcoal and watercolor.
- **ITEM#** BL1042 *SRP $17.00*
12 pages per pack
11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/bagged

PREMIERE400 (STRATHMORE)

400 Series Full Trim Format

400 Series already has a very serious history. Comic Book Boards 400 series is printed on the finest art paper available, **Strathmore**. Like the rest of the Blue Line products the 400 Series is preprinted with a non-photo blue border that allows the artist to draw comics the actual size that professionals draw.

• **S400 Series (SMOOTH)** surface is a 100% acid free bristol. This Strathmore board is ideal for detailed ink work and is also suited for pencil and marker.
12 pages per pack
11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/bagged.
- **ITEM#** BL1043 SMOOTH 2-PLY *SRP $19.00*
- **ITEM#** BL1045 SMOOTH 3-PLY *SRP $28.00*

• **S400 Series (REGULAR)** toothy surface is a 100% acid free bristol. This Strathmore board works well with pencils, inks, charcoal and pastel.
12 pages per pack
11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/bagged.
- **ITEM#** BL1044 REGUALR 2-PLY *SRP $19.00*
- **ITEM#** BL1046 REGULAR 3-PLY *SRP $28.00*

PREMIERE500 (STRATHMORE)

500 Series Full Trim Format

500 series comic book boards is the top of the line for art paper. Strathmore 500 is 100% cotton fiber, Acid free and unsurpassed for fine pen and pencil work.

• **500 Series (SMOOTH)** surface is a 100% cotton fiber acid free board. This Strathmore board is ideal for pen ink work and is also suited for pencil and marker.
12 pages per pack
11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/bagged.
- **ITEM#** BL1047 SMOOTH 2-PLY *SRP $41.00*
- **ITEM#** BL1049 SMOOTH 3-PLY *SRP $57.75*

• **500 Series (REGULAR)** toothy surface is a 100% cotton fiber acid free board. This Strathmore board works well with pencils, charcoal and watercolor.
12 pages per pack
11" x 17" pages with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area/bagged.
- **ITEM#** BL1048 REGULAR 2-PLY *SRP $41.00*
- **ITEM#** BL1050 REGULAR 3-PLY *SRP $57.75*

PRO COMIC BOOK ART BOARDS FULL TRIM FORMAT

Blue Line has taken the quality paper that they have used in the "Pro" pages for years and printed a newly designed Full Trim border format in non-photo blue ink.

This offering the artist the quality of Pro pages with an advanced page border.

In addition, each pack also includes one page of Blue Line Comic Book Cover Sheets, specifically laid out with a larger image area for standard comic book cover designs.

Use pencil, ink (brush recommened), markers, wash, acrylics.
- **ITEM#** BL1038 *SRP $15.95*
24 pages per pack.
11" x 17" 3- ply brite art boards with a 15 3/4" x 10 3/8" image border with a 9" x 13 3/4" safe area dotted border area and 1 Cover Sheet with 10 3/4" x 16" non-photo border printed/bagged.

PRO COMIC BOOK ART BOARDS TRADITIONAL FORMAT

Pro Comic Book Boards brite white surface offers a smooth surface to pencils and inking with a brush literally glides across the surface (quill pen not recommended). Pro has offered thousands of artist the opportunity to begin their careers on a pre-printed boardslike the

professional publisher uses.

Traditional Format has the original 10" x 15" image border with panel markers for a traditional page layout.

Page size is 11" x 17" with a non-photo blue image area of 10" x 15". In addition, each pack also includes one page of Blue Line Comic Book Cover Sheets, specifically laid out with a larger image area for standard comic book cover designs.

Use pencil, ink (brush recommened), markers, wash, acrylics.
- **ITEM#** BL1001 *SRP $15.95*
24 pages per pack.
11" x 17" 3- ply brite art boards with a 10" x 15" non-photo image printed and 1 Cover Sheet with 10 3/4" x 16" non-photo image printed/bagged.

COMIC BOOK BOARDS

(Traditional Format)

Comic Book Boards are specifically laid out with an image area for standard comic book designs. These boards like the other comic book boards offer an area to write the name of the book the artist is drawing, issue number, page number and date. This helps to keep track of your boards and where they belong. Double page spreads are a snap for an artist. Just take two comic book boards and then butt the sides together, apply tape down the back of those boards and then the artist is ready to illustrate a double-page drawing. Fast and easy with no cutting. They are 24 pages of Brite Art Index. Page size is 11" x 17" with a non-photo blue image area of 10" x 15".

Use pencil, ink (brush), marker, wash.
- **ITEM#** BL1003 *SRP $12.95*
24 pages per pack.
11" x 17" pages with a 10" x 15" non-photo image/ bagged

COMIC BOOK COVER SHEETS

These Comic Book Cover Sheets, show a border for your drawing with pre-marked bleeds for trimming with an area for the possible placement of the book's logo and company information clearly marked. This helps to keep all of the important elements of the covers from being covered up when the book logo and company info are placed later. They are 12 pages of 2-ply premium Brite art index board that come bagged and feature non-photo blue ink. Page size is 11" x 17" with an image area of 10 3/4" x 16".
- **ITEM#** BL1007 *SRP $9.95*
12 pages per pack
11" x 17" art pages printed with a 10 3/4" x 16" non-photo blue border printed/ bagged.

CUSTOMIZED ART PAPERS
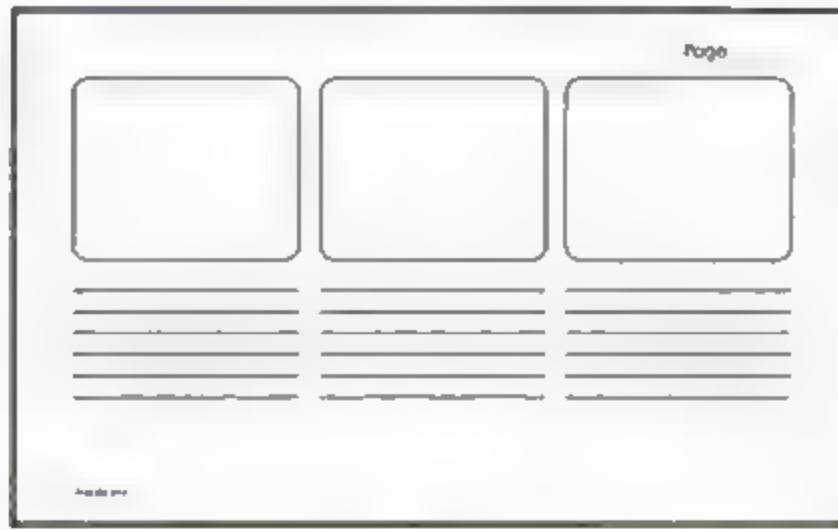
STORYBOARD TEMPLATES

Animators and Storyboard artist! Blue Line Storyboard Templates offers animators and writers a quick and easy way to show movement and sequences of a story or animation.

Storyboard Templates have three large panels with lines below each for detailed art and storytelling.
- ITEM# BL1018 *SRP $13.95*
100 sheets of 60 lb. 8 1/2 x 14 pages with 3 panels padded with colored cover.

CREATE YOUR OWN COMIC BOOK!

Blue Line has developed a simple and inexpensive step by step to create your very first comic book, that's fun, easy and comprehensive. A box set of Blue Line products that aid a person in making their own comic! It includes 1 Character Template, 6 Concept Sketch Pages, 6 Comic Book Layout Pages, 24 Comic Book Pages, 1 Comic Book Cover Sheet and a 24 page instructional comic book.

- ITEM# BL1002 *SRP $21.95*
Box Set. 37 art pages / 24 page b&w instructional comic book / full color die cut box / shrink wrapped.
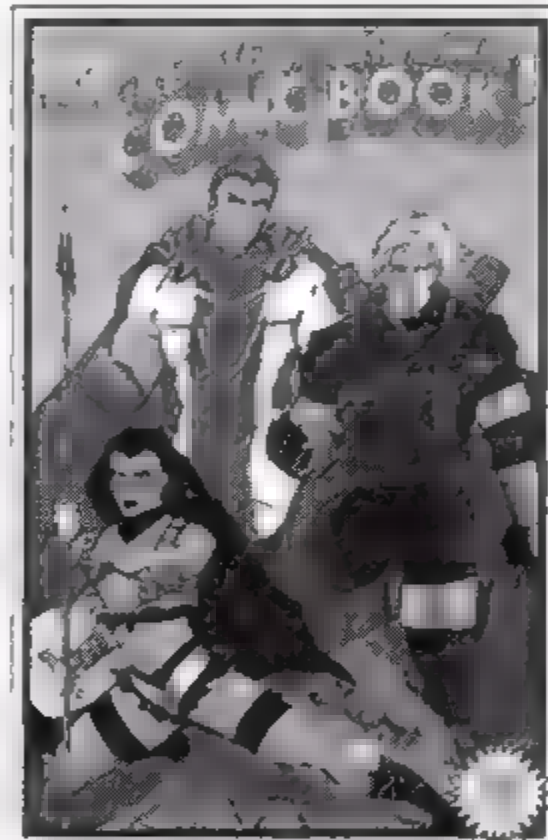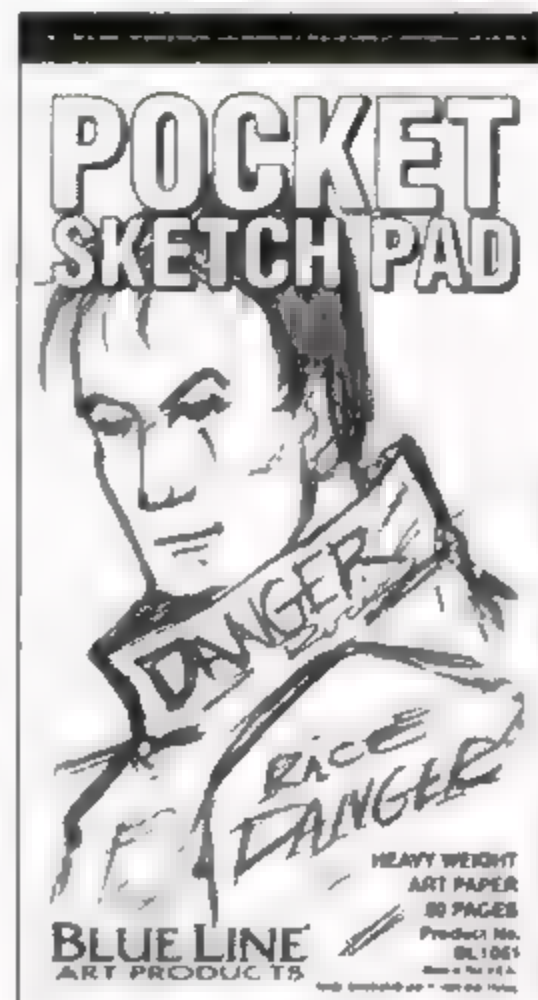
POCKET SKETCH PAD

50 pages of heavy illustration board to carry around in your pocket to have ready when your hit with a revolutionary vision. Great for quick sketches and designs. Featuring Blue Line's quality illustration paper. Great for pencilling, inking and washes.
50 pages / 5" x 9 1/2" / padded / two-color cover
- Item # BL1051 *SRP $5.95*

LAYOUT PAGES

Comic Book Layout Pages uses premium bond paper and printed in non-photo blue, of course, features markings to layout four thumbnails per sheet to detail your comic book page ideas and room for notations and other information.

Used for story boarding your comic book story. A geat tool for artists or writers to work out details for the story along with layouts of pages.
- ITEM# BL1005 *SRP $8.95*
30 8 1/2" x 11" pages printed in non-photo blue/ bagged.

CONCEPT SKETCH PAGES

Record and organize your creative ideas on a convenient, quality art board. Concept Sketch Pages are made from premium index board featuring non-photo blue ink so that the artist can ink his illustrations on a non-repro surface. Concept Sketch Pages offer an image area for an illustrator to draw a character scene or anything. And, it also gives room for written information to be included with the artwork. This is handy when a character is designed for a comic book and you want to include his bio, powers, etc., or a Role Playing character you're playing. These pages can easily be hole punched and inserted into a binder. A character template is even included for quick and easy character creations!
- ITEM# BL1004 *SRP $8.95*

25 art pages printed in non-photo blue/ bagged.

BLUE LINE SAMPLER II

If you haven't tried Blue Line products, here's your chance! The Blue Line Sampler includes 4-Comic Book Pages, 4-Concept Sketch Pages, 3-Comic Book Cover Sheets, 3- Layout Pages, 3-Pro Comic Book Pages, 3-Storyboard Templates, 3-Full Bleed Pro C.B. Pages, 1- Strathmore 300 smooth, 1- Strathmore 300 regular. All in non-photo blue, of course! That's 25 pages of five different Blue Line products! Check out all Blue Line and Blue Line Pro products in one fell swoop!
- ITEM# BL1040 *SRP $13.95*
25 pages of 8 different Blue Line products. 4-Comic Book Pages, 4-Concept Sketch Pages, 3-Comic Book Cover Sheets, 3- Layout Pages, 3-Pro Comic Book Pages, 3-Storyboard Templates, 3-Full Bleed Pro C.B. Pages, 1- Strathmore 300 smooth, 1- Strathmore 300 regular. 25 pages per pack.
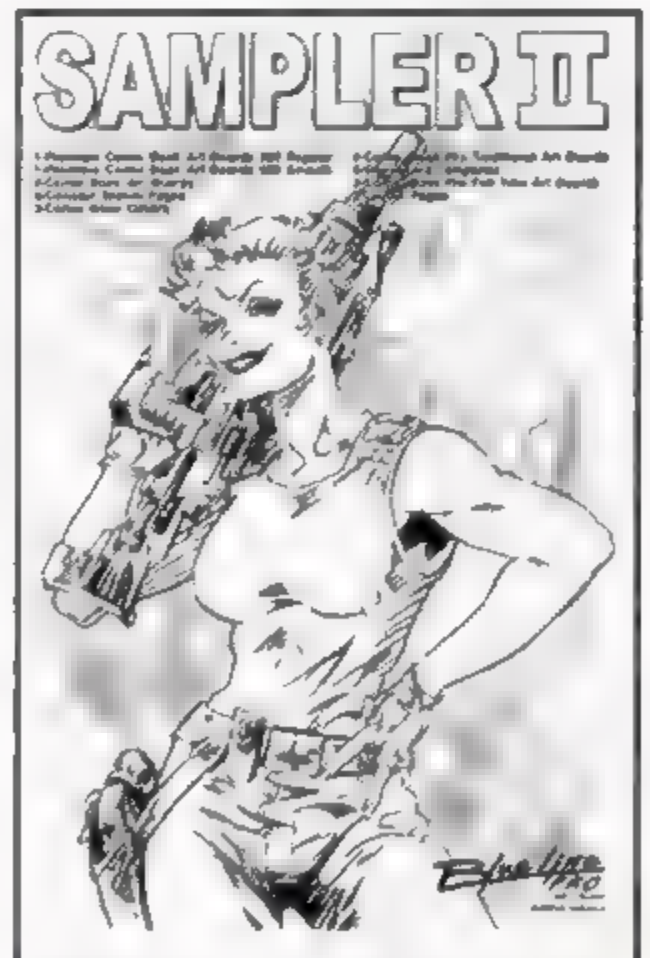
FONTS, WORK BOOK SERIES
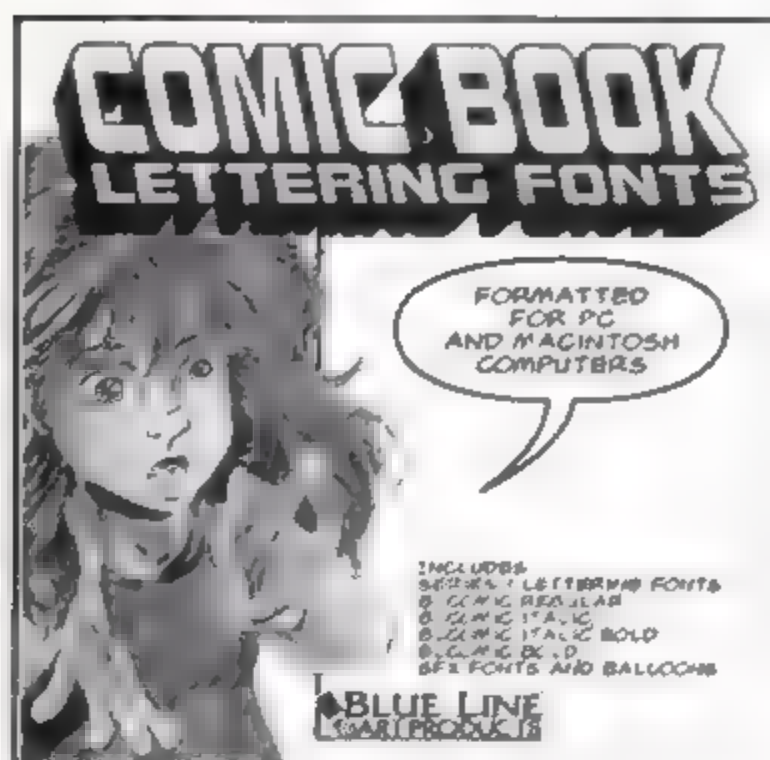
BLUE LINE COMIC BOOK LETTERING FONT SERIES 1

Blue Line now offers creators an inexpensive lettering font.

BLCOMIC font is formatted for Macintosh and PC Compatibles in a TruType format. BLSFX is a special effects font with pre-created sound effects that are ready for you to drop into place.

Also included is user configurable word balloons in .eps format.

ITEM# BL1019 *SRP $19.95*

Includes: BLCOMIC font (Regular, Bold, Italic, Italic Bold). BLSFX font and configurable word balloons.

3 1/2 disk PC and Mac. format.

BLCOMIC FONT: ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
1234567890

BLSFX FONT:

ARRGH! BLAM SPASH DOOM EEPYAH! FAWOOSH

GLUB HAM JINGLE MUNCH

OUCH POW RUMBLE SPLASH TAP UGGH VA-ROOOM

WHAM YAWN ZAP

SKETCH BOOK SERIES

Blue Line offers two different sizes of Sketch Books. A Regular 81/2" x 11" size and the Traditional 11" x 17" size both are filled with 200 pages of 70 lb. art paper. Both have hard covers with library quality stitch binding for durability and makes it easier to draw without an art table.

SKETCH BOOK REGULAR (8 1/2" x 11")

This standard sized hard covered book offers anyone with the ability to pick up a pencil the opportunity to draw. An artist could create their own library of sketches. Great for when you don't want to carry a sketch board around or your just sitting around with your friends.
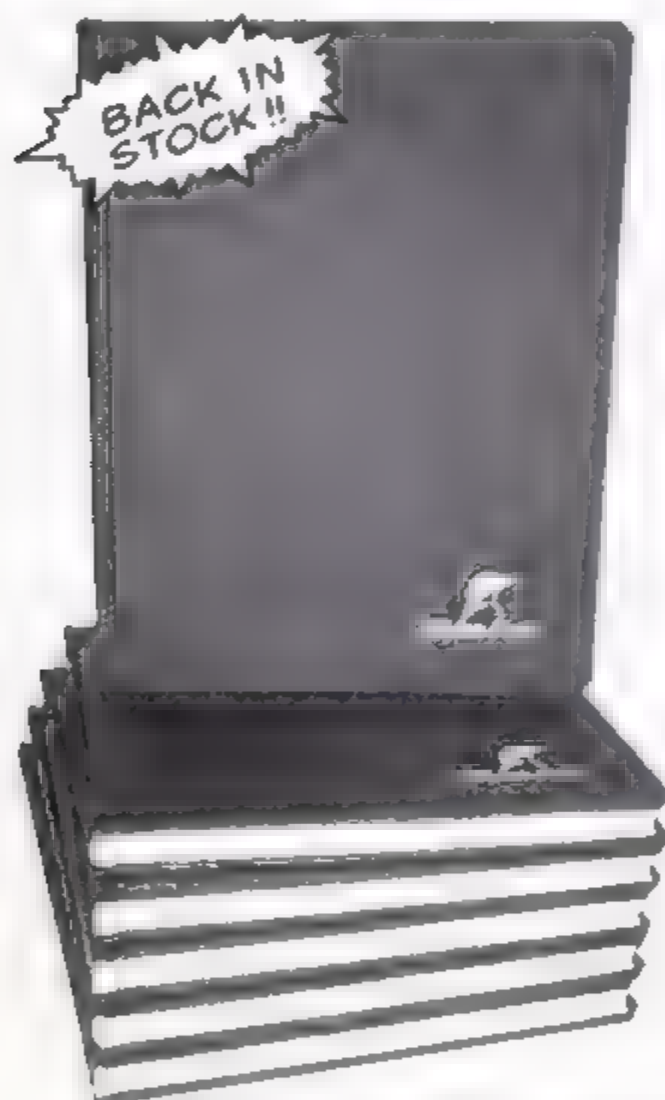
Also a good way to collect artist signatures and sketches at conventions!
- **Item #BL1010** / 200 pg. Hard cover book. *SRP $24.95*

SKETCH BOOK TRADITIONAL (11" x 17")

This Sketch Book offers the artist the ability to draw the size they're going to draw their original comic book pages.
- **Item #BL1011** / 200 pg. Hard cover book. *SRP $27.95*

BLUE LINE: A GUIDE TO THE COMIC BOOK BUSINESS

Every fan who reads comics has at one time or another felt the urge to join in on the fun, to take a more active role, to become a player instead of a spectator. In short, to create. You have the desire, now you need a plan.

That's where Blue Line's A Guide To The Comic Book Business comes in. It covers all of the basics for starting and maintaining a successful career in the comic book industry. It doesn't matter if your skills lie in penciling or management, this book tells you what to do to turn your hobby into a paid profession.

The first chapter gets you up-to-date on how the industry is set up. It gives you the basic information necessary to be a knowledgeable participant in the comics field. Now that you're seated, we serve the appetizers - how to go about creating your own comics. After you've digested this important info, it's time for the main course. You'll discover proven methods for making yourself an outstanding candidate. Then, we take a look at other jobs in the industry outside of the creative aspect for all of you wannabe corporate types. For a side dish, chapter five deals with that small but growing niche of the industry - the small press and self-publisher. Finally, dessert. We clue you in on effective ways to advertise and promote your work so that you can actually make money off of your talents.

So, for everyone who's ever dreamed of being on the other side of the table at a comic convention, doodled more in class notebooks than actually taking notes, this book is for you.

Forward by Beau Smith Executive Director of Publishing for McFarlane Productions

Written by Daniel Souder. Edited by Bob Hickey
- **ITEM#** BL1039 *SRP $17.95*

90 pages / b&w with full color cover. Spiral bound.
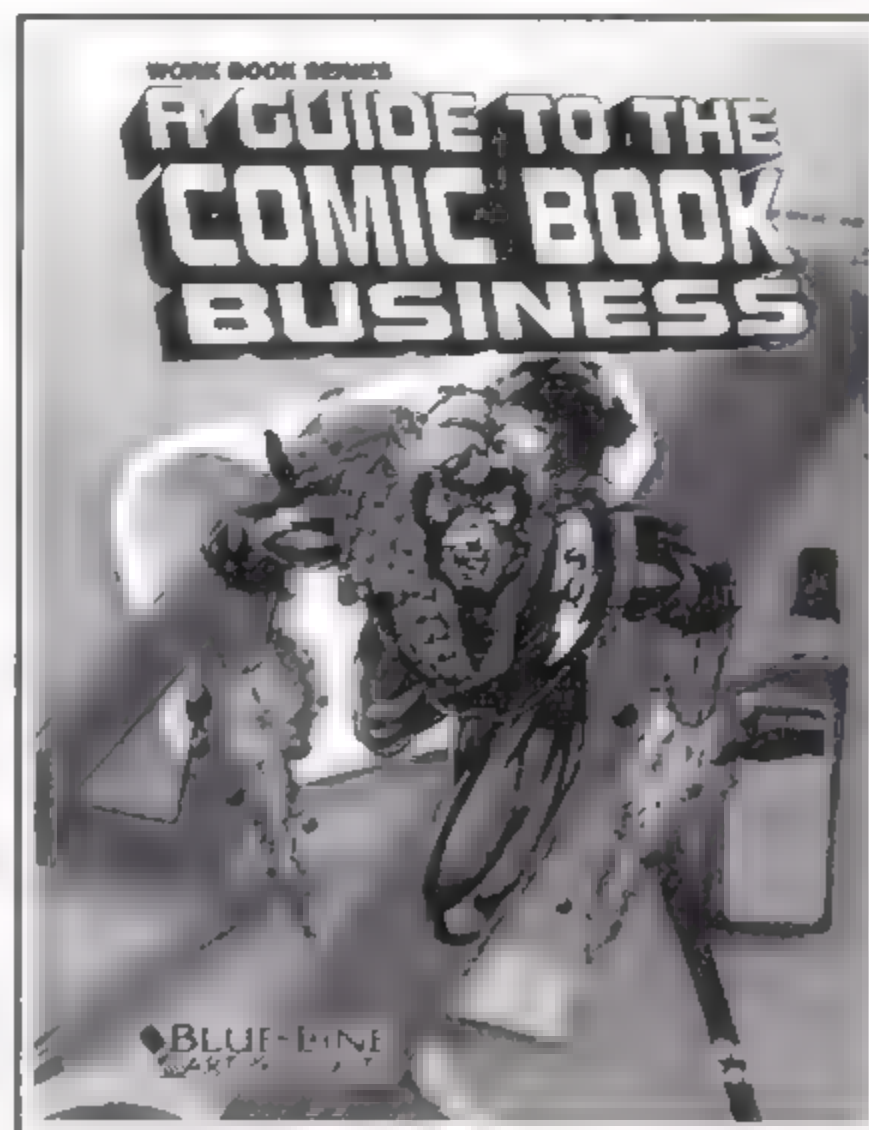
ART SUPPLIES

INDIA INK
• **Higgens Black India Ink**
A non-clogging ink for lettering pens and brushes. Opaque semi-gloss black finish and waterproof.
- **AR-4415** Black Ink (Higgins) 1oz $3 00
- **AR-EF44011** Black Magic Ink (Higgins) 1oz. $3 50
Higgens Waterproof Black Magic Ink is non-corrosive, free-flowing, and non-clogging. Great for use on tracing vellum and other film surfaces

• **Pelikan Drawing Ink**
One of the finest drawing ink available, Pelikan ink is great with technical pens, graphic and fine art papers or tracing cloth.
- **AR-PE211862** Black India Ink (Pelikan) 1oz $4 75
- **AR-PE211169** Black India Ink (Pelikan) 8oz $18.75
• **Pelikan "T" Ink**
Permanent and completely waterproof. Good with matte-surfaces or waterproof tracing cloth.
- **AR-PE221374** Black Ink Pelikan "T" 1oz $6 00
• **KOH-I-NOOR RAPIDOGRAPH INK**
Rapidograph Ink, Black, opaque ink for drafting film, paper, and tracing cloth. For use with Koh-I-Noor Rapidograph Pens.
- **AR-3084-FI** Koh-I-Noor Ink $3 95

• **WHITE OUT**
FW. Acrylic Artist Waterproof White Ink Great for use with technical pens, brushes, and dip pens.
- **A- R-FW-O11** FW White Acrylic Artist Ink $5 00

BRUSHES
• **Winsor/Newton Series 7**
Made with Kolinsky sable with traditional black handle. Great brush.
- **AR-5007001** Winsor/Newton Series7 Size#1 $18 95
- **AR-5007002** Winsor/Newton Series7 Size#2 $22 95
Round Brushes
Made with natural Sable with excellent edges and points for precise strokes.
- **AR-NB-38-0** Round Brush Size #0 $3 00
- **AR-NB-38-1** Round Brush Size #1 $3 25
- **AR-NB-38-2** Round Brush Size #2 $3 95
- **AR-056009016** Round Brush Size#3 $3.95

PENCILS & QUILL PENS
• **Non-Photo Blue Pencil**
Makes marks not appear when artwork is reproduced. Very useful.
- **AR-761-5** Non-photo Blue Pencil $ 60
• **Quill Inking Pen**
Quill Pens offers super-fine flexible point. Used by many professional inkers

- **AR-H9432** Quill Inking Pen #102 (Tip & Holder) $2 25
- **AR-H9402** 12 Crow Quill #102 Tips (Inking Pen Nibs only) $13.95

ERASERS
• **Kneaded Eraser**
Gray soft bendable eraser used for pencil and charcoal.
- **AR-1224** Kneaded Rubber Eraser Large $1 15
• **Eraser Pencils**
Peel off wrap ideal for detail erasing.
- **AR-400** Eraser Pencils $1 15
• **Pental Clic**
Pen style holder, retract as needed
- **AR-ZE-21C** Pentel Clic Eraser/Holder $1 95
- **AR-ZER-2** Pentel Refill Erasers $1.75
• **Erasing Shield**
Metal shield with different sizes and shapes.
- **AR-FT-5370** Erasing Shield $1.10

PENCIL SHARPNER
Canister Sharpener offers metal blades with high impact plastic container
- **AR-MR906** Canister Sharper $3 95

• **ALVIN PENSTIX**
Graphic waterproof drawing pen offering India Ink density. Black permanent drawing ink
- **AR-4013-EEF** 0 3mm $1.55
- **AR-4017-F** 0 7mm $1 55
- **AR-4015-EF** 0.5mm $1 55
• **Penstix Set**
Includes all 3 Pentrix Sizes
- **AR-4033** .3mm, 7mm, 5mm $4 45

• **Penstix Drawing/Sketching Markers**
Offers maximum India drawing ink like density. Black waterproof permanent ink.
- **AR-3013-EEF** 0 3mm ExEx Fine $1 55
- **AR-3015-EF** 0 5mm Ex Fine $1 55
- **AR-3017-F** 0 7mm Fine $1 55
• **Pentrix Drawing/Sketching Marker Set**
Set of all 3 sizes.
- **AR-3033** Set of 3 .3, 5, 7 mm $4 45

SAKURA PIGMA BRUSH
Archival performance with flexible brush style nib. Very fine lines or broad strokes. Water/chem. proof + fade resistant
- **AR-XSDK-BR-49** Black $3 00

ALVIN DRAWING PEN/MARKERS
• **Tech-Liner Super Point Drawing Pen/Markers**
Permanent waterproof ink that dries instantly. Nibs set in stainless steel sleeves for protection
- **AR-TL01** 0 1mm $1 95
- **AR-TL02** 0 2mm $1 95
- **AR-TL03** 0 3mm $1 95
- **AR-TL04** 0.4mm $1 95
- **AR-TL05** 0.5mm $1 95
Tech-Liner Super Point Drawing Pen/Markers Sets
- **AR-TLP5** set of 5 (all sizes above) $9 50
- **AR-TLP3** set of 3 (.1,.3, 5mm) $5 75

KOH-I-NOOR RAPIDOGRAPH PENS
Rapidograph Pens are made of impact and chemical-resistant components for drawing and specialty inks. Good balance and self-polishing stainless steel points.
- **AR-3165-06/0** Tech Pen Size 6x0 (13mm) $27 00
- **AR-3165-04/0** Tech Pen Size 4x0 (.18mm) $27 00
- **AR-3165-03/0** Tech Pen Size 3x0 (25mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-02/0** Tech Pen Size 2x0 (3mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-01/0** Tech Pen Size #0 (35mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-01** Tech Pen Size #1 (5mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-02** Tech Pen Size #2 (6mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-03** Tech Pen Size #3 (.8mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-04** Tech Pen Size #4 (1mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-06** Tech Pen Size #6 (1 4mm) $22 00
- **AR-3165-07** Tech Pen Size #7 (2mm) $22 00

MECHANICAL PENCIL
Berol Mechanical Pencil is precision made w/button lead release and light aluminum barrel.
• **Mechanical Pencil 2mm.**
- **AR-BP10C** $6 95
• **12-Pencil Leads- 2mm. HB**
- **AR-BP2375-HB** $10 50
• **12-Pencil Leads- 2mm. 2H**
- **AR-BP2375-2H** $10 50
• **12-Non-Photo Blue Leads-2mm.**
- **AR-BP2376-NPB** $10 50
• **Mechanical Pencil Sharpener**
Provides professional point for standard leads
- **AR-BP14C** Pencil Shapener (Mech Pencil) $10 75

PRISMACOLOR MARKERS
• **Prismacolor Singles**
Unique four in one design creates four line widths from one double-ended marker. Extra broad nibs imitates paint brush stroke while fine and thin nibs achieve gentle refined strokes
- All Colors are available!
- **All Singles** $3.30
• **Metallic: single nib**
- **AR-PM117** (Broad) Metallic Silver
- **AR-PM118** (Fine) Metallic Silver
- **AR-PM119** (Broad) Metallic Gold
- **AR-PM120** (Fine) Metallic Gold
- **All Metallic Singles** $3.30
PRISMACOLOR SETS
• **Primary/Secondary 12-Set**
Includes AR-PM. 50, 19, 15, 57, 6, 4, 32, 44, 53, 31, 61, and 9.
- **AR-BP12N** $40 00
• **Cool Grey 12-set**
- **AR-BP12P** $40 00
• **Warm Grey 12-set**
- **AR-BP12Q** $40 00
• **French Grey 12-set**
- **AR-BP12R** $40 00
• **Prismacolor 24 set**
- **AR-BP24S** $79 25
• **Prismacolor48 set**
- **AR-BP48S** $158 50
• **Prismacolor 72 set**
- **AR-BP72S** $238 00
• **Prismacolor 120 set**
- **AR-BP120S** $394 00

You must purchase a minimum of 12 single marker each time you order.

• **Prismacolor144 set**
- **AR-BP144S** $470 00
• **Empty Studio Marker Stacker**
- **AR-STUDIO** $18 00
• **Prismacolor 24 set w/hard carrying case**
- **AR-BP24C** $90 00
• **Prismacolor 48 set w/hard carrying case**
- **AR-BP48C** $170 00

- All Colors are available!
- **AR-PM1** Process Red
- **AR-PM4** Crimson Red
- **AR-PM5** Scarlet Lake
- **AR-PM6** Carmine Red
- **AR-PM7** Magenta
- **AR-PM8** Pink
- **AR-PM10** Blush Pink
- **AR-PM11** Deco Pink
- **AR-PM12** Light Pink
- **AR-PM13** Poppy Red
- **AR-PM14** Pale Vermilion
- **AR-PM15** Yellowed Orange
- **AR-PM16** Orange
- **AR-PM17** Sunburst Yellow
- **AR-PM18** Yellow Ochre
- **AR-PM19** Canary Yellow
- **AR-PM21** Tulip Yellow
- **AR-PM23** Cream
- **AR-PM24** Yellow Chartreuse
- **AR-PM25** Spring Green
- **AR-PM26** Lt Olive Green
- **AR-PM27** Chartreuse
- **AR-PM28** Olive Green
- **AR-PM31** Dark Green
- **AR-PM32** Parrot Green
- **AR-PM33** Hunter Green
- **AR-PM36** Lime Green
- **AR-PM37** Aquemarine
- **AR-PM38** Teal Blue
- **AR-PM39** True Blue
- **AR-PM40** Copenhagan Blue
- **AR-PM42** Violet Blue
- **AR-PM43** Indigo Blue
- **AR-PM44** Ultramarine
- **AR-PM45** Navy Blue
- **AR-PM46** Light Aqua
- **AR-PM47** Non-photo Blue
- **AR-PM48** Lt Cerulean Blue
- **AR-PM50** Violet
- **AR-PM51** Black Grape
- **AR-PM53** Mulberry
- **AR-PM55** Rhodamine
- **AR-PM59** Lavender
- **AR-PM60** Violet Mist
- **AR-PM61** Dark Umber
- **AR-PM62** Sepia
- **AR-PM65** Sienna Brown
- **AR-PM69** Goldenrod
- **AR-PM70** Sand
- **AR-PM71** Buff
- **AR-PM72** Eggshell
- **AR-PM73** Flagstone Red
- **AR-PM78** Brick Beige
- **AR-PM79** Brick White
- **AR-PM80** Putty
- **AR-PM82** Terra Cotta
- **AR-PM86** Cherry
- **AR-PM88** Dark Brown

- AR-PM89 Light Walnut
- AR-PM90 Walnut
- AR-PM93 Burnt Ochre
- AR-PM95 Light Tan
- AR-PM96 Blond Wood
- AR-PM97 Warm Black
- AR-PM98 Black
- AR-PM99 Warm Grey 10%
- AR-PM100 Warm Grey 20%
- AR-PM101 Warm Grey 30%
- AR-PM102 Warm Grey 40%
- AR-PM103 Warm Grey 50%
- AR-PM104 Warm Grey 60%
- AR-PM105 Warm Grey 70%
- AR-PM106 Warm Grey 80%
- AR-PM107 Warm Grey 90%
- AR-PM108 Cool Grey 10%
- AR-PM109 Cool Grey 20%
- AR-PM110 Cool Grey 30%
- AR-PM111 Cool Grey 40%
- AR-PM112 Cool Grey 50%
- AR-PM113 Cool Grey 60%
- AR-PM114 Cool Grey 70%
- AR-PM115 Cool Grey 80%
- AR-PM116 Cool Grey 90%
- AR-PM122 Salmon Pink
- AR-PM123 Spanish Orange
- AR-PM124 Limepool
- AR-PM125 Peacock Blue
- AR-PM126 Cerulean Blue
- AR-PM127 Imperial Violet
- AR-PM128 Parma Violet
- AR-PM129 Dahlia Purple
- AR-PM130 Deco Orange
- AR-PM131 Deco Yellow
- AR-PM132 Jasmine
- AR-PM133 Deco Pink
- AR-PM134 Deco Blue
- AR-PM135 Deco Green
- AR-PM136 Deco Aqua
- AR-PM137 Clay Rose
- AR-PM138 Pink Rose
- AR-PM140 Celadon Green
- AR-PM141 Jade Green
- AR-PM142 Brittany Blue
- AR-PM143 Mediterranean Blue
- AR-PM144 Cloud Blue
- AR-PM145 Blue Slate
- AR-PM146 Periwinkle
- AR-PM147 Greyed Lavender
- AR-PM148 Cornflower
- AR-PM149 Bronze
- AR-PM150 Mahogany Red
- AR-PM151 Raspberry
- AR-PM152 Henna
- AR-PM153 Pumpkin Orange
- AR-PM154 Mineral Orange
- AR-PM155 French Grey 10%
- AR-PM156 French Grey 20%
- AR-PM157 French Grey 30%
- AR-PM158 French Grey 40%
- AR-PM159 French Grey 50%
- AR-PM160 French Grey 60%
- AR-PM161 French Grey 70%
- AR-PM162 French Grey 80%
- AR-PM163 French Grey 90%
- AR-PM164 Peacock Green
- AR-PM165 Grass Green
- AR-PM166 True Green
- AR-PM167 Apple Green
- AR-PM168 Dark Purple
- AR-PM169 Tuscan Red
- AR-PM170 Peach
- AR-PM171 Lilac
- AR-PM172 Light Umber
- AR-PM173 Light Violet
- AR-PM184 Forest Green
- AR-PM185 Spruce
- AR-PM186 Emerald
- AR-PM187 Leaf Green
- AR-PM190 Tangerine
- All Single Markers $3.30

> You must purchase a minimum of 12 single marker each time you order.

RULERS
- **Stainless Steel Rulers** offering flexible steel with non-skid cork backing
- AR-200-12 Steel Ruler 12 inch Cork Backing $5 95
- AR-200-18 Steel Ruler 18 inch Cork Backing $6 95
- **Plastic Ruler** 1 inch with 1/16" markings and metric markings.
- AR-C36 Ruler 12" (plastic ruler) $1 25
- AR-18 Ruler 6" (plastic ruler) $ 50

SHARPIE MARKERS
Permanent markers with high intensity ink. Quick drying
- AR-SA37101 Ultra Fine Black $1 30
- AR-SA35101 Extra Fine Black $1.30
- AR-SA30101 Regular Black $1.30
- AR-SA33101 Super Sharpie $1 95

METALLIC PENS
Offers high quality metallic ink. Great for autographs
- AR-SA46115 Gold Pen $4 50
- AR-SA46120 Silver Pen $4 50

CHINA MARKING PENCILS
Offers moisture resistant, non-toxic odor-free pigments. Self Sharpening. Packaged in box of 12
- AR-173T Black $10 75 (per dz)
- AR-164T White $10 75 (per dz)

T-SQUARES
- **Plastic T-squares** offering flexible plastic with both metric and standard measurements
- AR-HX02 Plastic 12" $3.95
- AR-NBA18 Plastic 18" $7 95
- AR-NBA24 Plastic 24" $10 95
- **Aluminum T-squares** offering hard tempered aluminum blade riveted to a rugged plastic head
- AR-FR63-112 Aluminum 12" $10.95
- AR-FR63-118 Aluminum 18" $12 95
- AR-FR63-124 Aluminum 24" $13 95
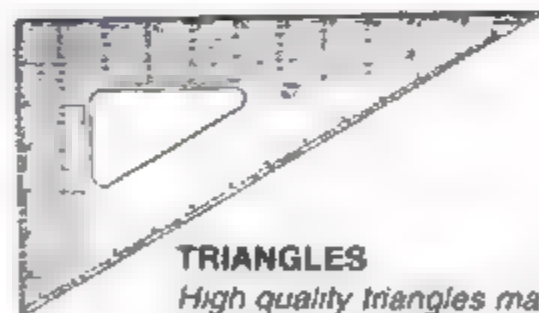
TRIANGLES
High quality triangles made of .080" acrylic. Raised inking edges. Great for Inkers.
- **30" x 60" W/ Inking Edge**
- AR-1204-60 Triangle 30"x60" 4 inch $3 50
- AR-1206-60 Triangle 30"x60" 6 inch $4 50
- AR-1208-60 Triangle 30"x60" 8 inch $5 50
- AR-1210-60 Triangle 30"x60" 10 inch $6 50
- AR-1212-60 Triangle 30" 60" 12 inch $8 50
- **45" x 90" W/ Inking Edge**
- AR-1204-45 Triangle 45"x90" 4 inch $4 50
- AR-1206-45 Triangle 45"x90" 6 inch $5 50
- AR-1208-45 Triangle 45"x90" 8 inch $7 50
- AR-1210-45 Triangle 45"x90" 10 inch $9 50
- AR-1212-45 Triangle 45"x90" 12 inch $13 50

COMPASS SET
Geometry set includes ruler, compass, two triangles, protractor, eraser, and sharpener
- **8-piece Geometry Set**
- AR-HX18807 $4 95
- **8-Piece Geometry Set** (brass compass)
- AR-723405 $7 95
- **Basic Geometry Set**
4-piece Geometry Set (Ruler, 12' protractor, 30/60 + 45/90 triangles)
- AR-FL03 $5 95
- **Basic Combination Compass**
6-piece compass set side-screw compass, knee joint compass, extension bar, spare leads, 2" divider point and a lead pointer.
- AR-S61 Set $15.95
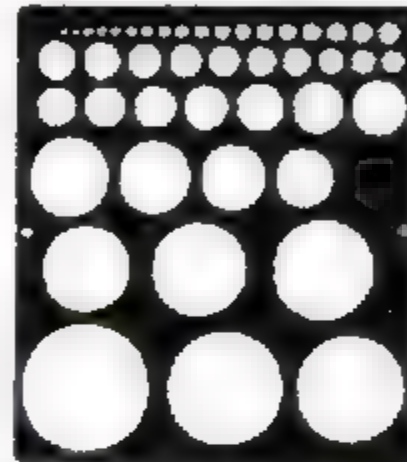
CIRCLE TEMPLATES / FRENCH CURVES
- **Circle Templates**
Metric and standard Risers for smear-free drawing (Great for Inkers)
- **Large Circles**
- AR-13001 $7 95
- **Extra Large Circles**
- AR-13011 $6 95
- **French Curves (Inking Edge)**
- AR-9000 Set $6 95
- **Ellipse Temps.**
- AR-PK12691 $12.00

DISPLAY PORTFOLIOS
- **ARTFOLIOS**
24 pages of acid, pvc, and lignen safe art sleeves. Archival Safe.
- AR-IA1212 Artfolio Book 11 x 17 w/ 24 sheets $15.95
(Holds Blue Line Comic Book Art Boards)
- AR-IA 1214 Artfolio book 14 x 17 w/ 24 sheets $25.95
(Holds most oversized art boards)
- **POCKET PORTFOLIO**
- AR-FL419WH Pocket Portfolio 14 x 17 $10 50
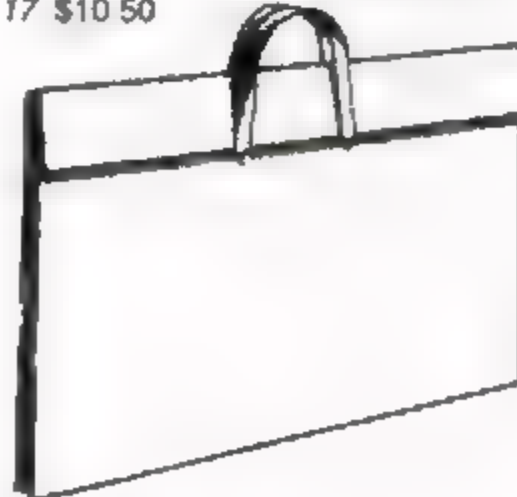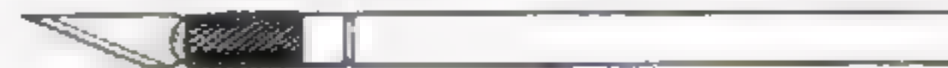
STORAGE BOXES
- **Sketch Pac** 2-sided safe storing box 12 3/8" x 4 ¼" x 1 ¾"
- AR-6880AB $12 95

- **One Tray Art Bins** 13" x 7 ¼" x5 ¾" Elevated tray for viewing of supplies in bottom bin Tight Latch
- AR-6843AC black $15 25

DRAFTSMAN BRUSH
Removes shavings from paper Cleaning without fear of smudging
- **Draftsman Brush** (cleaning paper)
- AR-FT5391 $6 00

XACTO KNIFE
Rubberized barrel. Rear-release mechanism with safety cap.
- **Xacto Knife**
- AR-XA3826 $5.25
- Xacto Refill Blades #1
- AR-OLKB $6 50

WORKABLE FIXATIF (Krylon)
Provides lasting protection, Prevents smudging, dusting and wrinkling
- **Workable Fixatif**
- AR-KR1306 $8.95

RUBBER CEMENT
Contact adhesive for paste-up and other graphic art uses.
- **Rubber Cement** 4oz.
- AR-BT138 $3 50
- **Rubber Cement Quart**
- AR-BT102 $13.25
- **Rubber Cement Thinner Pint**
- AR-BT201 $8 50
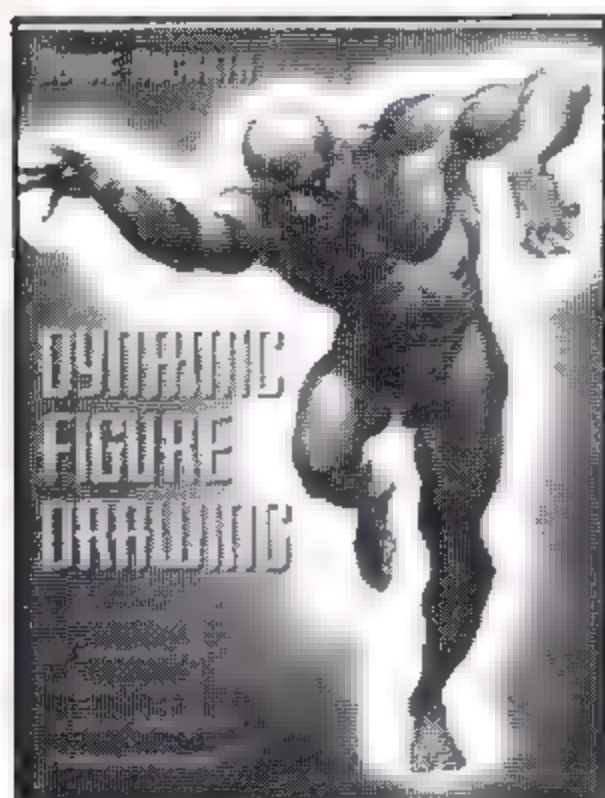- **Rubber Cement Pick-Up** (eraser)
- AR-BT700 $1 50

COMIC BOOK ORIGINAL ART SLEEVES
Protect your original Art Work
- **Comic Book Original Art Sleeves** 11 ½" x 19" Polyethylene (3 0 mil.)
- AR-BAG 1119-25 25 Bags $7 50
- AR-BAG 1119-100 100 Bag $25 00
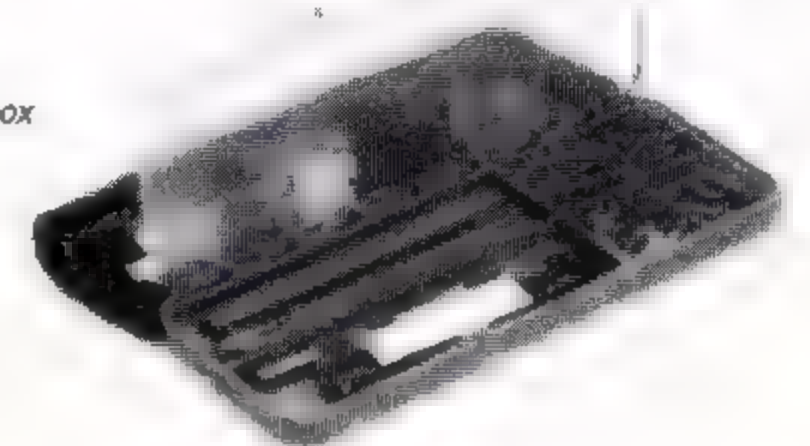
DYNAMIC FIGURE DRAWING

By Burne Hogarth

Figure drawing is the most essential - and the most difficult - of all skills for the artist to learn The hardest problem is to visualize the figure in the tremendous variety of poses which the body takes in action, poses which plunge the various forms for the body into deep space and show them in radical foreshortening.

ITEM# AB1001 SRP $23.00

176 pages. 8 1/2 x 11 Hundreds of drawings and diagrams
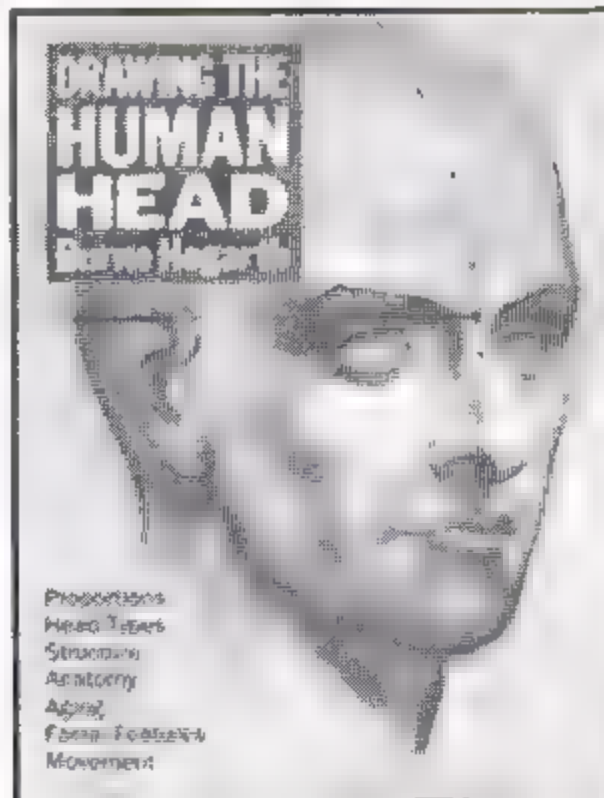
DRAWING THE HUMAN HEAD

By Burne Hogarth

Drawing the Human Head represents a landmark in art instruction books. A comprehensive work on the human head, this outstanding handbook is so unique in concept and approach that no artist's library will be complete without it

ITEM# AB1003 SRP $19.75

160 pages 8 1/2 x 11 Over 300 black and white illustrations
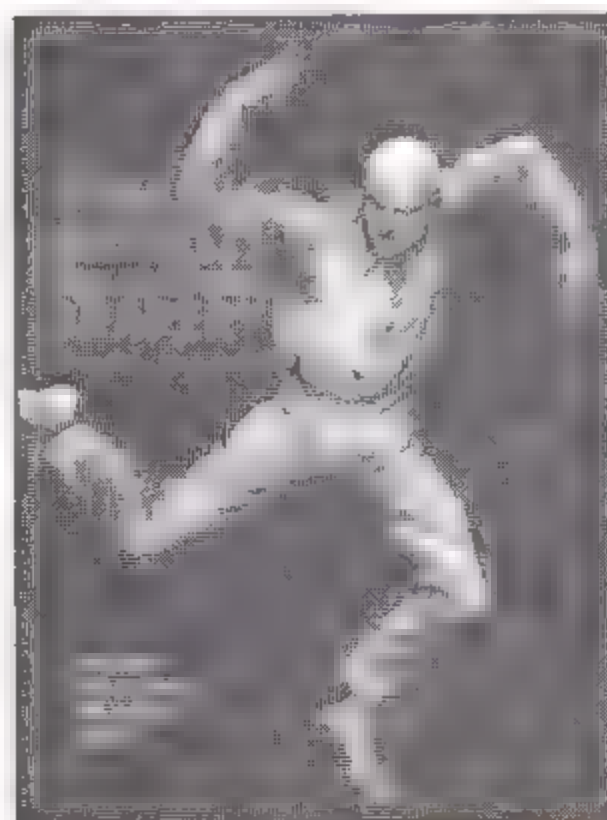
DYNAMIC WRINKLES AND DRAPERY

By Burne Hogarth

Through a series of extraordinary drawings and diagrams Mr Hogarth, famous for his wrinkles, folds, and drapery His basic idea is that an accurate rendering of wrinkle patterns depends on understanding how the actions of a figure provoke any material

ITEM# AB1005 SRP $26.00

144 pages 8 1/4 x 11 over 150 two-color illustrations
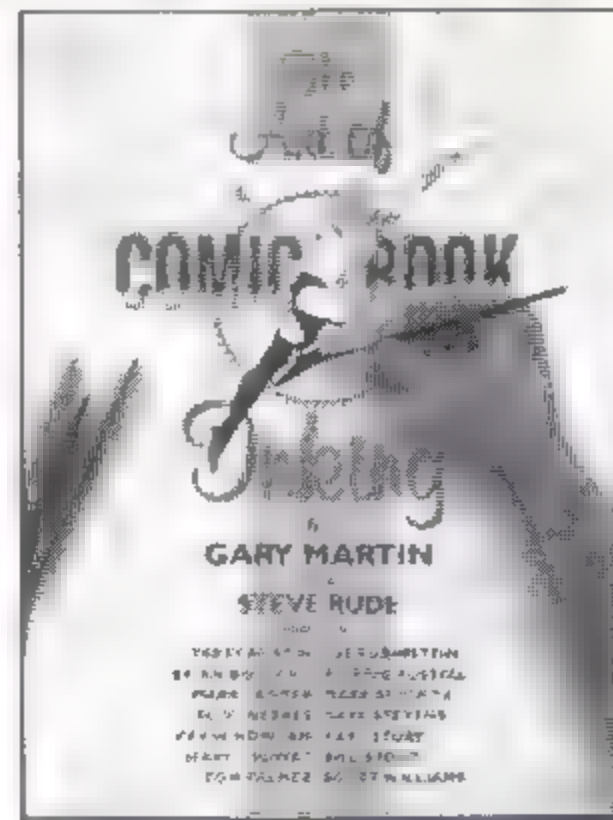
THE ART OF COMIC BOOK INKING

by Gary Martin with Steve Rude

Tips from comics' greatest inkers! Tools of the trade! Brushes vs pens! Feathering! Establishing a light source! Developing a style! Spotting blacks! Crosshatching!

For anyone interested in The Art of Comic-Book Inking

ITEM# AB1008 SRP $17.50

112 pages 8 1/4 x 11 Over 180 illustrations and diagrams

DYNAMIC ANATOMY

By Burne Hogarth

Dynamic Anatomy presents a unique, detailed study of the human figure as artistic anatomy

By emphasizing the relationship of mass to movement and thus going far beyond the factual elements of anatomy, this fascinating book affords the reader sound practical methods for drawing human forms that come alive.

ITEM# AB1002 SRP $22.25

232 pages. 8 1/2 x 11 Over 300 two color drawings and diagrams Bibliography, Index.
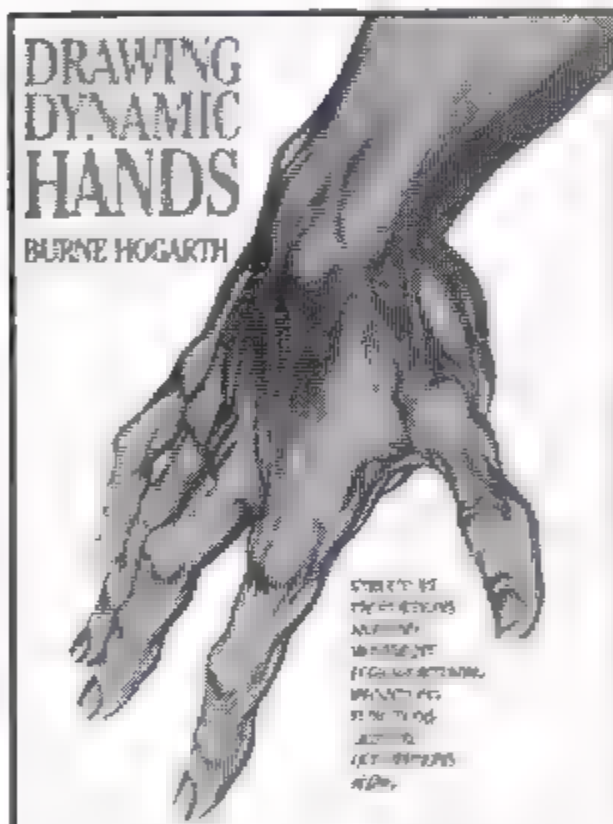
DRAWING DYNAMIC HANDS

By Burne Hogarth

Drawing Dynamic Hands is one of the most challenging skills required of the artist who draws the human figure Here, Burne Hogarth, master of the human form presents the most comprehensive book ever published on drawing human hands

ITEM# AB1004 SRP $19.75

144 pages. 8 1/4 x 11 Over 300 black and white illustrations.

DYNAMIC LIGHT AND SHADE

By Burne Hogarth

Mastery of light and shade-rendered with accuracy and expressive power-is the key to three-dimensional form in drawing and painting

Hogarth begins with the simplest kind of light and shade showing how a dark silhouette on white paper can communicate form and space

ITEM# AB1006 SRP $19.75

160 pages 8 1/4 x 11 224 black and white illustrations.

DRAWING DYNAMIC COMICS

By Andy Smith

This fresh approach to drawing covers everything you need to create your own comic book page Starting with lessons on form and structure, Andy moves on to building basic figures and setting them in motion, creating stylized characters and adding backgrounds to bring your scenes to life

ITEM# AB1012 SRP $22.95

144 pages 8 1/2 by 11 Color illustrations

POWERLINES

By Jim Callahan

From what's the best kind of paper to work on to the differences in pencils and what's expected from the artist to their editors, this initial volume of POWERLINES gets you pointed in the right direction. Even if you have no intention of starting your own superhero dynasty, it's a fascinating guidebook that teaches you what to look for in artistic excellence.

ITEM# AB1009 SRP $5.95

44 pages 6 1/2 by 10 Black and white illustrations

HOW TO DRAW COMICS THE MARVEL WAY

By Stan Lee and John Buscema

Stan lee, the Mighty Man from Marvel, and John Buscema, active and adventuresome artist behind Spider-Man, Silver Surfer, Conan the Barbarian, and the Mighty Thor, have collaborated on this comics compendium

ITEM# AB1010 SRP $17.25

160 pages 8 1/2 by 11

Black and white illustration
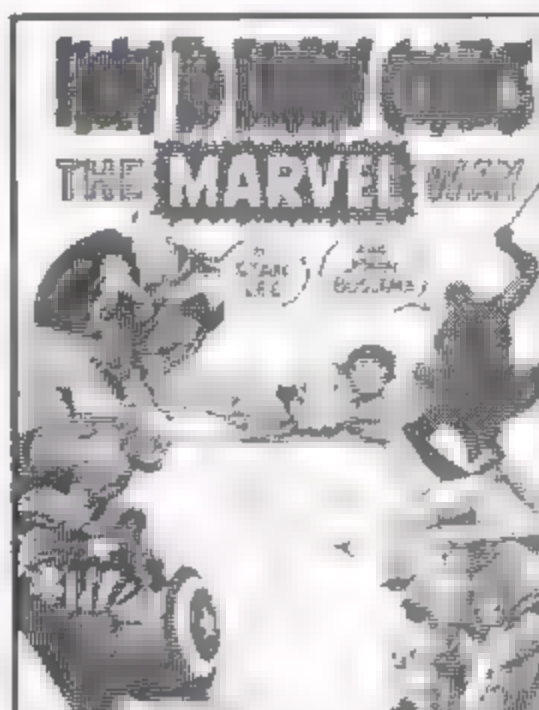
SUPERHEROES

By Joe Kubert

Learn from legendary writer-illustrator Joe Kubert Learn secrets of foreshortening perspective twist and tilt, and dimensionality Super anatomy how to exaggerate muscles, how to draw hair, hands, and feet how to get right proportions Why its crucial to develop your skills as a storyteller and how to do it These concepts and more are all jammed packed in on book

ITEM# AB1011 SRP $22.95

144 pages 9 by 11 1/2 Color illustrations
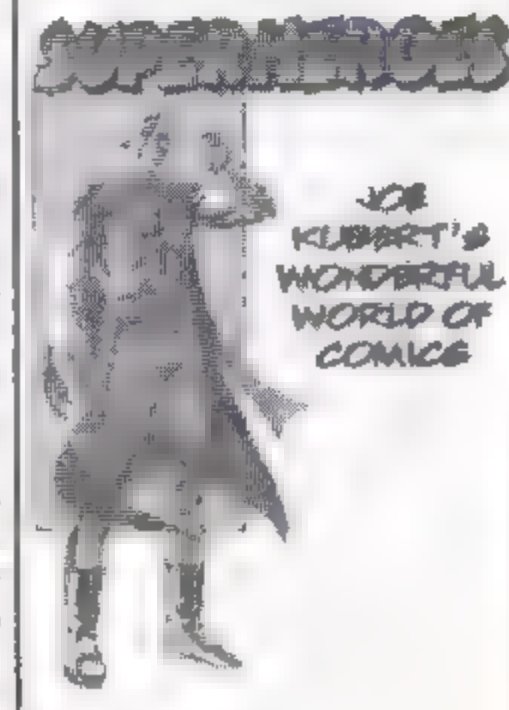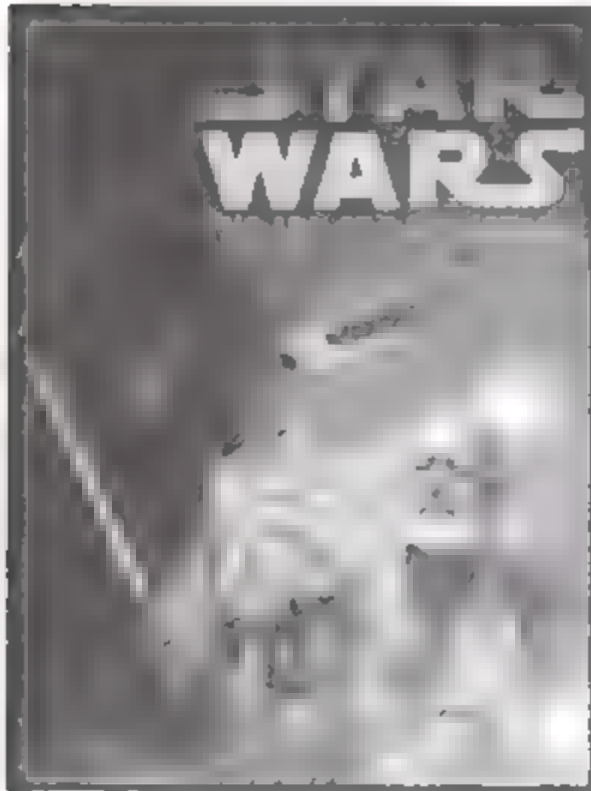
STAR WARS THE ART OF DAVE DORMAN

by Dave Dorman and Lurene Haines
One of the most outstanding illustrator to come along in the past decade Dave Dorman has made his mark on the Star Wars saga This book offers the most complete volume of Dave's Star Wars illustrations Packed with paints, sketches and a very detailed how-to from "original design" to "completed painting" of this books cover
- Hardcover with wrap around cover Signed and Numbered by Dave Dorman 128 pages 9 x 11 Over 150 paintings, sketches and photos
ITEM# AB1007H *SRP $35.50*

- Softcover with a Autographed Book Plate (penciled drawing of books cover)
ITEM# AB1007SA *SRP $23.50*
128 pages. 9 x 11 Over 150 paintings, sketches and photos

HOW TO DRAW MANGA

by Antarctic Press
A series of How-To-Draw-Manga guidebooks Ben Dunn Fred Perry and many other artist from Antarctic Press continue to present a comprehensive guide to figure drawing in the manga style with lessons in anatomy, porportions facial construction expression on poses!

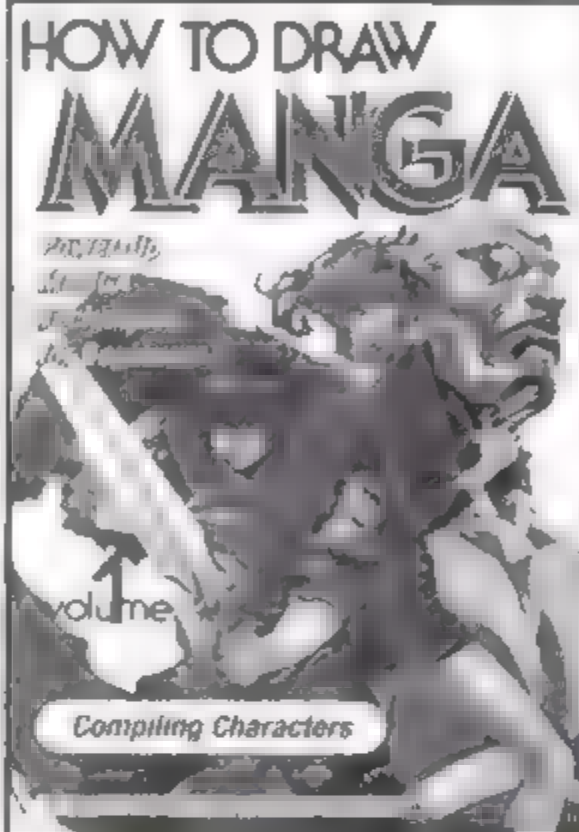- Issue #1 - 32 black and white pages.
ITEM# AB1014 *SRP $4.95*

- Issue #2 - 32 black and white pages.
ITEM# AB1014-2 *SRP $4.95*

- Issue #3 - 32 black and white pages.
ITEM# AB1014-3 *SRP $4.95*

HOW TO DRAW MANGA

Vol. 1 Compiling Characters

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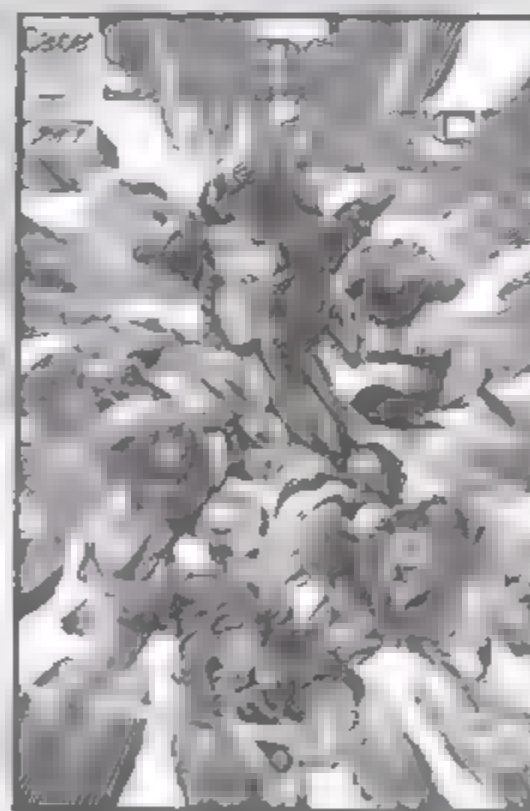
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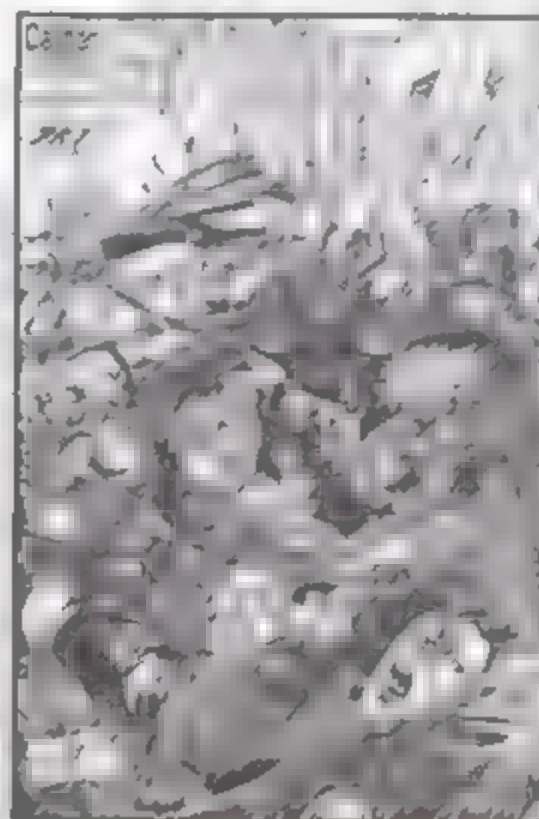
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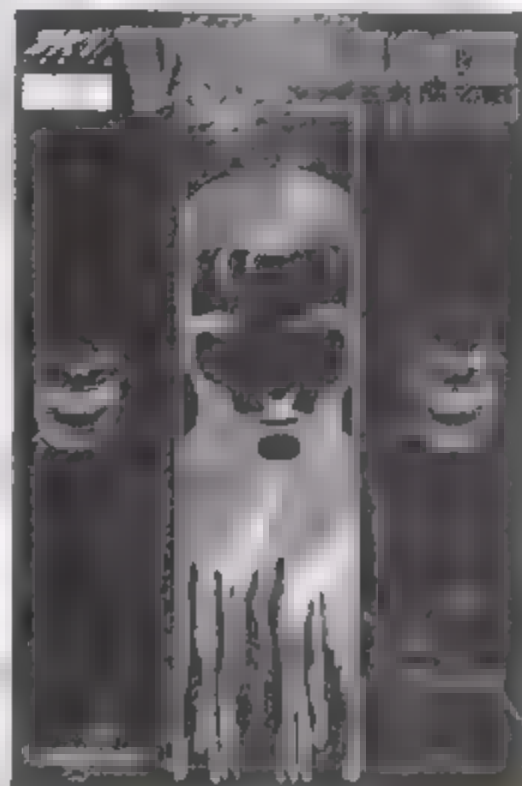
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PARTS UNKNOWN

By Beau Smith, Brad Gorby
Published by Image Comics packaged by Sacred Studios

Parts Unknown is the best homage to B-Movies ever to see print in a sequential art form. A group of reptillian-like aliens called the Scalons marking Earth their own turf. The Scalon's science department messed around with thier home planets atmosphere and killed off all of the females. That left the males of Scalon with two choices-- Either flip a coin to see sho wears the dress, or find another planet to conquer with better looking babes, ripe for starting a whole new race. You guessed it-- Earth was singled out as the Best Little Singles' Bar in the Universe. The lizard loverboys made a beeline, straight to Earth, lookin' for lust in all the wrong places. As in every alien invasion B-Movie, there are some good guys that figure it's up to them to save the world. That's where Pendelton Spurr and Maria Lucci Come in They are law enforcement like the world has never seen. They cross every t with a left to the gut and dot every i with a pair of brass knuckles. Spurr is Arnold, Stallone and Bruce Willis, All rolled into a huge, muscled package. Lucci is the most beautiful thing that has ever kicked your teeth out. Together, they are the Pain Express-- Don't fight aliens without them.
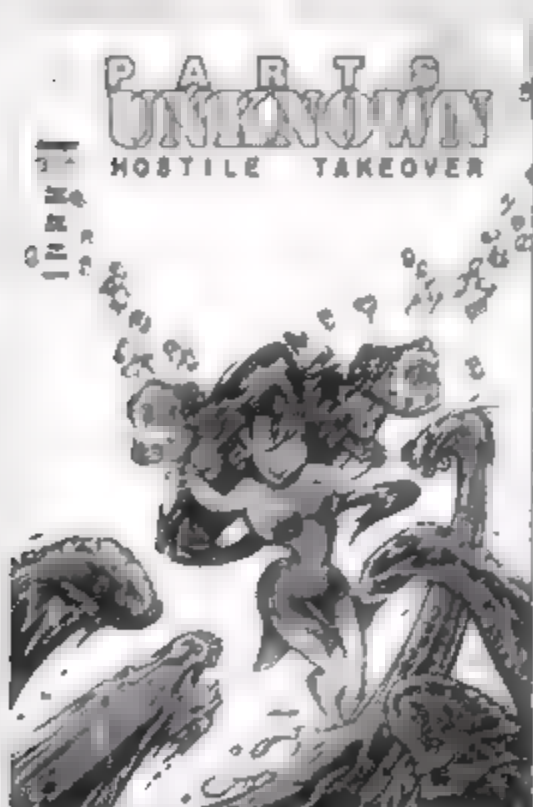

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by Beau Smith and Brad Gorby
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San Diego Comic Com International
July 19-22, 2001 at the San Diego Convention Center, San Diego CA. Contact Fae Desmond. Comic-Con International P.O. Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458. Ph. (619) 544-9555, Fax. (619) 544-0743, E-mail. CCIWEB@AOL.COM , Website. WWW.COMIC-CON.ORG

The EXPO 2001
Holiday Inn Select, Bethesda, Maryland September 14th through the 16th, 2001 Fri: 3:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m. Sat: 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Sun: 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. (Small Press Summit) website: www.spxpo.com

Dragon Con
Friday August 31st though Monday September 3rd, 2001 at the Hyatt Regency Atlanta and Atlanta Marriott Marquis, GA. Contact Ed Krammer, P.O. Box 47696, Atlanta, GA 30362-0696, Ph. (770) 925-0115, Fax. (770) 623-6321, E-mail. EDKRAMER@AOL.COM, Website. WWW.DRAGONCON.ORG

Heroes Convention
June 8-10, 2001, Charlotte Convention Center, contact: Heroes Convention 2001, P.O. Box 9181 Charlotte, NC 28299 phone: 704-375-7463. WWW.HEROESONLINE.COM.

Mega Con
March 2-4, 2001 at Orlando FL, Contact Beth Widera, Mega Con, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677, Ph. (813) 891-1702, Fax. (813) 891-0542, E-mail. megacon2000@megaconvention.com , Website. www.megaconvention.com.

Mid-Ohio-Con,
November 24-25 2001 at Hilton at Easton Town Center Columbus OH, Contact Roger Price, R.A.P. Productions, P.O. Box 3831, Mansfield, OH 44907-3831, Ph. (419) 526-1427, Fax. (603) 250-9252, E-mail. MIDOHIOCON@WFCOMICS.COM, Website. WWW.MIDOHIOCON.COM

Chicago Comicfest
March 31-April 1 2001, Ramada Plaza Hotel O'Hare. Contact Motor City Conventions INC., 19785 W. 12 Mile Rd., Suite 231 Southfield, MI 48076 Phone: 248-426-8059 Fax: 248-426-8064.

Motor City Comic Con
May 18-20 2001, Novi expo Center, Novi, MI. Contact Motor City Conventions INC., 19785 W. 12 Mile Rd., Suite 231 Southfield, MI 48076 Phone: 248-426-8059 Fax: 248-426-8064.

Southeast Trade & Retail Symposium
August 30, Atlanta, GA.. Contact Motor City Conventions INC., 19785 W. 12 Mile Rd., Suite 231 Southfield, MI 48076 Phone: 248-426-8059 Fax: 248-426-8064.

Pittsburgh Comicon
April 27th, 28th, and 29th 2001, Pittsburgh Expomart, Monroeville, PA Contact: Michael & Renee George 1002 Graham Ave., Windber, PA 15963 PHONE: (814) 467-4116; FAX: (814) 467-4416 website: www.pittsburghcomicon.com

Planet Comicon III
Saturday, March 25, 10am-5pm Sunday, March 26, 10am-4pm Overland Park International Trade Center 115th & Metcalf, Overland Park, KSAdmission $10/Day, $12/2-day pass, $5/kids ages 6-14, under 6 free. Website: www.planetcomicon.com

S.P.A.C.E.
Small Press and Alternative Comics Expo 2001. An Exhibition of Small Press, Alternative, and Creator-Owned Comics Saturday March 31, 2001 Rhodes Center at The Ohio Expo Center Columbus, Ohio website: members.aol.com/BackPorchC/space.html. Contact Back Porch Comics c/o Bob Corby 2940 Royalwood Dr. Dublin OH 43017-1904.

Origins
July 5-8, Columbus, OH. Contact WotC, P.O. Box 1740, Renton, WA 98057-1740 phone: 800-529-EXPO website: www.wizards.com/conventions .

Gen Con
August 2-5, Milwaukee, WI. Contact WotC, P.O. Box 1740, Renton, WA 98057-1740 phone: 800-529-EXPO website: www.wizards.com/conventions .

Wizard World Chicago 2001
August 17-19, 2001 at the Rosemont Expo Center in suburban Chicago. Contact: Brenda Cook 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920, ph. (914) 268-8068, fax (914) 268-8069. Website: www.wizardworld.com

WonderCon
April 20-22 2001, Oakland Convention Center, San Francisco Bay Area Contact: WonderCon, 2991 Shattuck Ave., #202, Berkeley, CA 94705 phone: 925 825-5410 website: www.wondercon.com

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WANT YOUR BOOK to kick ass? Contact Tom at 48 Columbine Ave. Islip, NY 11751 or marv@optonline.net for samples

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LOGO DESIGN

Designing a logo can be a very challenging experience. As the creator of a book you'll want the logo to represent just what your particular book is about. If you're designing a logo for someone else's book then you should work closely with its creator to find out exactly what they want.

I have several questions that I ask myself when I'm designing a logo, such as:

• *Where is the book/magazine/comic going to appear?*

If it's in a book store or comic book shop then you'll be competing against hundreds of colorful logos lined up side-by side. This can make for a very difficult job as you have to try and make your logo to stand out above everyone else's in order to sell your book.

• *When displayed on the shelves, will the full front of the book show or does only the top third of the book show?*

Many comic shops show the entire cover - it's the main selling point of the book, and they usually want to give it the space it needs in the hope the cover art will help it to sell. But knowing some don't, overall your best bet will be to design a logo for the top third of the cover area. If only the top of the book will show then the logo needs to be as strong as you can make it. It needs to get the buyer to pick it up and then let the artwork of the cover do its job and sell! But the trick is getting the book noticed and picked up to begin with.

• *How am I limited?*

Find out up front if the creator has a vision or a need for the logo to be a certain way. Don't spend hours creating the coolest logo roughs only to find out that the creator had wanted it another way.

• *How much time can I spend on it?*

If you're designing a logo for your own project then you'll probably find

out that you are always tweaking on the logo, reworking it. If it is a job for someone else you'll need to set up a deadline and the number of times you will be willing to redesign the logo before the final is approved. If you don't set a certain amount of times that you will rework the design then you may find yourself working on the logo just as long as the creator is working on his full book. At some point you have to state your limitations and know when to move on.

After you ask all the questions above and get the answers that you need, you're ready to begin designing.

The hardest thing that I find when designing a logo for my own project or company is staying satisfied with the look of the logo after a certain amount time. Many times I'll start a logo way in advance of the deadline so that I'll have time to tweak it before I actually need to use it.

Many designers go straight to the computer and start to whip up designs. This does save time, but I find for myself that if I don't have an idea before sitting down then everything I come up with is stale and stiff, so I'll start in my trusty old sketchbook and start roughing designs. I show these to the creator to see if I'm going in the right direction. Many times we'll pick one from the roughs, then I scan it and rework the design in the computer and start laying out different colors comps. If I'm not going in the right direction then I haven't wasted a lot of valuable computer time.

Things to think about when you're designing a logo:

Graphics!

You probable want to include artwork in the design (see sidebar "Warlace logo"). A graphic can add personalization to a logo and offer the creator an opportunity to contribute to the design. It may just be what

you need to make the logo jump out.

Font style is a major concern when designing. If you use a narrow/thin font, you should ask yourself if it is readable from a distance? Is this a concern? This is a question you'll need to work out early in the design. Most comics are seen from a distance of about three feet from the racks, but do you want your logo to be seen from a greater distance?

Using the SKETCH logo as an example, we wanted it to seen from a distance. The first design offered the rough look that we wanted but it didn't standout among the crowd (fig. 1). The second design incorporated a bold font with the original free hand logo placed inside (fig. 2). This turned out to be what we used. It stood out and it stayed with the free hand feel that we wanted. But as with most designers, we couldn't stay totally satisfied. With this issue we've removed the drop shadow and added an additional outline around the logo to give us more opportunities to add a beveled edge or a second color (fig. 3).

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

StormQuest

Fig. 3

StormQuest

Fig. 4

Readability!

You need to be careful when designing your logo to make sure it's readable. I really like the StormQuest logo in that it incorporated an item from the team's jackets. It was also readable. Not until we were working on the final issue did the writer, Tom Bierbaum, make a remark to me about how fans of the book had misconstrued the logo as StormWest (fig. 4). I couldn't believe it. This was one time that I was too close to the project. I didn't see it, but I had to agree. After Tom brought it up, I made a small change by moving the Quest part of the name up by the Storm. This made for a slightly smaller logo but it was very readable (fig. 5). This logo appeared on the last issue and will be used on the eComic version released later this summer.

Keep Your Roughs!

You never have bad ideas; they just didn't work for this project. You never now when an old design rough may work on a different logo. I always look to designs that I didn't use to see if they might work on a current project. This saves time, which we all need more of.

Save Each Step!

When designing on a computer you'll want to save each major step. This way you can come back and make changes without starting completely over.

If you're designing in Photoshop then you'll want to save a copy of the logo's line art in black and white in bit map mode. If you color the logo, save the Photoshop file as a .psd file and keep the layers so you can easily make color/transparencies changes as needed.

LogoDesign

When I started this logo I knew the lead character was a young woman. I wanted the lettering to be thin without being hard to read. I also wanted to incorporate a graphic from the series.

The first logo had a natural design element with the rough font and the image of the Native American spear across the bottom (fig. A). This just wasn't what I was looking for. The logo was too plain.

The final logo was a complete design from the pencil drawing. No fonts were used. I scanned the pencils into Photoshop (fig. B), then placed the image into CorelTrace (fig. C). After tracing the image and saving it as an eps, I opened Corel Draw and was able to clean up the nodes and rearrange them to even out the thickness of each letter (fig. D). Then under "effects" I selected "contour", and set it to outside and one layer. This traces around the lettering to allow another outline.

I inserted the shield for size so I could draw a circle around it (fig. E). Once I drew the circle I then deleted the shield, for the time being at least. I selected all the graphics and then once more selected Contour and placed another outline around the logo to hold all the elements together (fig. F).

Now that all the line art is in place, I save the logo as an .ai file. This file will be easy to import into Photo Shop.

The shield was freehand illustrated and scanned into Photoshop, then colored and saved.

Once the logo is opened in Photoshop, open the shield and make a copy of the file. Then I clicked on the logo and inserted it where I wanted it to be (fig. G. Taking complimentary colors, I color the logo and save the .psd version of the file (fig. H).

Fig. A

Fig. B

Fig. C

Fig. D

Fig. E

Fig. F

Fig. G

Fig. H

MASK MEDIA #2

by Clint McElroy

One of the most effective tools at the disposal of radio advertisers is a little thing called a "remote". They are aptly named since they are, basically, broadcasts from a remote location, away from the studios of the radio station. They can add excitement to the sound of a radio station, and generate not only interest but also sales for the client.

They can also be a gigantic waste of a radio advertiser's money if not done right.

I have done thousands of the blasted things and I can tell you that not all of them have gone well...as a matter of fact I have done one or two remotes where I felt myself lucky to escape with my equipment intact...and I am not talking about my little micro-wave transmitter and headphones, either.

The truth is, there are some very basic facts to consider which will decide whether your radio remote is going to be a smashing success, akin to opening Scrooge McDuck's vaults and letting the money pour in...or a disaster similar to walking into a Star Trek convention and screaming at the top of your lungs: "Seven-Of-Nine SUCKS!"

EXCUSE ME, MR. BLUTARSKY. WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU ARE GOING?

Well, gee professor, I'm a comic book creator...an artist/writer...I didn't think this column was aimed at me...but at shop owners and stuff.

SO YOU WERE GOING TO SKIP CLASS AND HEAD DOWN TO THE LOCAL WATERING HOLE FOR A LIBATION?

Does that mean I was gonna grab a couple of beers?

YES, IT DOES.

In that case...Exactly!

WRONG, MR. BLUTARSKY. YOU AS A COMIC BOOK CREATOR SHOULD BE VERY INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC. BECAUSE THE PRODUCT BEING SOLD BY THE AFOREMENTIONED SHOP OWNER...IS YOUR CREATION, AND MOST RADIO REMOTES SCHEDULED AT COMIC SHOPS ARE CENTERED AROUND A CREATOR'S VISIT TO THE STORE.

You're gonna make me sit back down and listen, aren't you?

YES, MR BLUTARSKY, I MOST CERTAINLY AM.

Radio remotes differ from station to station, but there are a few commonalities that run through all. They usually run two or three hours, with three to four breaks per hour. These breaks are usually a bit longer than the average sixty-second commercial, sometimes as long as four or five minutes, but don't count on that. Usually, you can expect a good two minutes per break, usually three breaks an hour. At the very basic level, you are getting a live commercial done by the announcer assigned to your remote.

If you want to do a remote, choose your radio station carefully. Radio stations are programmed according to demographics and you should choose your station based on the demographics. If you are trying to reach young customers, then go with the Top-40 station. (If you aren't sure which is which, just listen for five minutes...if you hear Britney Spears pop up, you've

found your prey). Album Rock stations generally appeal to a college crowd. Want older readers, say the 25-49 age group? It becomes a little trickier. Class boundaries have really broken down in radio over the last decade or so. That lawyer in the $400 suit may be listening to Brooks and Dunn on the local Country station. When in doubt, just ask the radio station advertising executive about their demographics. Tell him you want to see his Arbitron ratings for whichever age group in which you are interested. He'll probably wet his pants when you do...and that is sort of a fringe benefit to the process.

Heh-heh. That's funny. The guy peeing his pants.

PLEASE, MR. BLUTARSKY.

One thing to keep in mind: the bigger the Arbitron ratings, the bigger the price tag. Use your melon a little bit. You may want to settle for a slightly smaller piece of the audience pie and spend a little less money. If you choose correctly, you will get the best bang for your buck.

Before moving off this topic, let me urge you to also give serious thought to the age group you want to reach before you make your choice. I would guess that most comic shop owners are going to jump at the stations with the younger demographics, but don't forget, a lot of the people who were buying comics in the 1980's (remember? The BOOM YEARS?) are now in their mid-thirties to mid-forties. They probably have the most disposable income and either still buy comics and don't tell anyone about it, or they might be lured back if they hear

something that really catches their ear.

So now you have your radio station, the question is WHEN are you going to have the remote. This is even more important, and there are a lot of factors that go into that decision. The day of the week is vital. A lot of remotes are scheduled on Saturdays, using the logic that people are "out and about" on that day. For that reason, Saturday probably lends itself to comic book shop remotes, since Mom and Dad will be available to bring the little ones to the remote. A second choice (again, depending on who you are trying to reach) would be a weekday afternoon, but schedule it to catch people after work, but not so late that people are settled in for the evening. Getting Dad out of the Lazy-Boy, once he's hunkered in is almost impossible.

Also, look into potential dates, as well. If some big local event is going on (a big football game, a music festival, etc.) you may want to stay away from it...unless of course, you can tie in with that event.

YES, MR. BLUTARSKY?

Your last column was a lot funnier.

THANK YOU FOR THAT SCINTILLATING OBSERVATION, MR. BLUTARSKY.

Once the remote gets up and running, perhaps you think your job is over. Wrong. While it may seem that the workload now falls on the announcer coming to do the broadcast, the success still rests on your shoulders. Trust me on this one, you could have Howard Stern or Don Imus doing your remote, and if you don't have anything for them to talk about, NOBODY will come out for it.

Most remotes feature free food, provided by the radio station. You need to make the call on this. Do you want a bunch of pre-teens handling your comics after eating a couple of slices of pizza when their only clean-up consisted of them sucking the spare grease off their dainty little fingers before ripping open the Mylar to inspect your autographed copy of Giant-Sized X-Men #1?

The radio stations also provide give-aways like t-shirts or CDs. You should add to this. Dip into that huge slush fund of comics you have under the counter and just give them away handfuls at a time. Is it really going to hurt your business to give away that pristine copy of Crystar #8?

YES MR. BLUTARSKY?

I don't think Crystar got to an eighth issue.

THANK YOU, MR. BLUTARSKY.

As I was saying, get together a couple of hundred of these comics and have the announcer give them away...one at a time, five at a time...whatever works. Trust me, when he or she says, "The next ten people in the door get a free stack of comics," you will get a response. And maybe have a couple of really cool door prizes for people to sign up for. That will also get warm bodies through the doors. It also can be structured so they have to come BACK in through your doors to collect the prize they win, some time after the remote is over. That way you get them into your store multiple times. It's called marketing, folks.

Have a sale: two-for-one, half price...whatever is the most dramatic, go with it. Remember: odds are you are going to be bringing in a lot of new folks with this broadcast, you need to take advantage of it. If you have a pull list, be ready to add names to it. Do you have a website? Publicize it.

Put out all those freebies the publishers send you. Remember that big box of those "Lex Luthor For President" buttons you lied to DC about, telling them you gave them all out in the Fall of 2000? Put them out now.

Another thing that makes a remote special is having a guest. In this case, the remote ties in with a daylong store appearance or some other event. In other words, the store appearance is your BIG event, and the radio remote is helping to promote it... which in turn is promoting the store...and also the creator's books.

Creators: do interviews with the radio

announcer during the breaks. Don't expect the typical "Biff! Pow! Zap!" questions you would get from someone with only a passing knowledge of comics. You may be surprised at the announcer. There seems to be a lot of cross-pollination between the comic book industry and the radio industry. I was shocked recently when a large number of people on Chuck Dixon's web page message board (www.dixonverse.com) admitted they work in the radio business.

Creators should be prepared to pose for pictures, do sketches, sign books, whatever it takes. And whatever you do, make sure that radio announcer knows about it and talks about it during the breaks. This is your chance to push a lot of projects, not just the one you may be at the store to promote.

While we're on that subject, you storeowners should look into co-op money from the publishers. Sometimes, co-op can be used to pay for remotes.

One of the great things about radio remotes is that they continue to work even after the remote is over. If you do your job right, even a listener who can't make it to your location during the remote will remember you, will remember all the cool stuff you have, and will make a point of visiting your business at some point in the future.

YES, MR. BLUTARSKY?

But that will only happen if your remote sounds really exciting with a lot of cool stuff going on, with a lot of great products and prices?

EXACTLY RIGHT. I AM IMPRESSED, MR BLUTARSKY. YOU GLEANED ALL OF THAT FROM THE COLUMN.

Nah, not really. I just looked at the notes of the girl sitting in the desk next to mine.

CLASS DISMISSED.

Letters Forum

I drew a comic page once and it was real good, but when it comes to doing the rest, it seems like I get too overwhelmed and chicken out by putting it off for another day. My probation officer said that's called procrastination, but what does he know anyway? I was also told that I don't have the discipline and deserve a slap in the face and a kick in the balls to set me straight, and you know what? My reverend was right minus the slap and the kick. I need discipline. I love drawing, but I work all day and come home exhausted. (Who would've thought being a gigolo was so hard?) Anyway I would really like to know what motivates you to draw when you don't feel too. What forms of discipline do you practice to make you draw? How can I lower the price of Twinkies? Where are my Vince Carter shorts?

-Allister Thomas

Hey,

Priorities. You've got to want to draw comics more then anything. Including eating and sleeping. If you really want to draw, you'll find a way to fit it into your schedule. Only you can make the decision to put forth the effort to succeed. Besides a good slap and kick would start me in the right direction.

Bob

Hello Mr. Flint,

I don't know if you remember me or not but you published an E-mail of mine in Sketch's volume 1, No. 5. I must say I was not expecting to see my E-mail in your letters section but it was a pleasant surprise.

In your response you stated that you wanted me to write again to let you know what I'd like to see in your magazine. The only thing I can say to that is, since I'm not a professional, I don't really have any rights telling you what you should touch on in your magazine. My knowledge on the construction of a comic magazine or, what it should contain, approaches nil. But, as far as I can tell you and your team are doing a bang up job and by the time all is said and done I will surely be more knowledgeable than I am now. You also wanted to know what my interests were...well, I'd say ALL of it.

Hoping not to bore you I'll touch upon what I mean. I am a self-taught artist (unprofessional as I said) and I've been drawing for as long as I can remember but, this is not about me, it's about my son. Many years ago there was (besides Creepy and Eerie) a beautiful comic mag called Epic, I'm sure you remember it. Well I decided that I was going to try to send some of my artwork to them so that I could get their opinions, ideas and comments. I finished pencilling the first page but unfortunately when I went out to get that month's issue I was to discover that it would be the last. So, devastated, I went home and threw what I had been working on into the bottom of a drawer and there it sat among my "odds and ends" drawings until my son discovered it some 15+ years later (I am 41.) He was impressed enough with it that he asked me to finish it. So, here I am today, ravenously reading, everything about creating comics I can get my hands on in order to create a personalized comic for my kid. So, this is where your fantastic mag comes in. I can't say enough good things about your magazine. It came out just in time for me and I am now a devout fan.

Anyway, all I can say is keep on truckin'. You guys are doing great and there is nowhere for you and your publication to go but forward to be the best.

My Personal Thanks

-Daniel Black

P.S. Berni Wrightson is a GOD!!!

Dear Mr. Black

Thanks for taking the time to write us back and share your story and interests with us. As I've mentioned numerous times, Sketch not only hopes to educate and instruct, but to help foster a real enjoyment and interest in the medium. Your letter is refreshing, it's good to hear that there are people out there just enjoying the medium as a great, fun read and having a good time – that's what it's really all about.

I remember the Warren magazine family quite well, and loved all of them – even some of 1984 ("Rex Havoc" was very funny)! I always hope someone will collect them into some kind of affordable sets, similar to Russ Cochran's terrific EC collections. Epic was started by the wonderful and sorely missed Archie Goodwin, one of the greatest creative individuals I've ever had the opportunity to meet. It contained some very nice work, and you can probably find very affordable runs of it at your shop or some cons.

Bernie Wrightson is also a personal favorite, and some of the best comic coin I have spent was on a first edition of his great A Look Back hardcover, which you should certainly seek out if you're a Wrightson fan.

The important thing is that you're continuing to enjoy drawing, and getting to share some interest with your son – way to bring him up right! I hope you'll keep at your art, there's nothing like creating for the sheer pleasure of it. Hopefully your son will grab a pencil as well! I'm glad Sketch plays a part in your enjoyment, send us a copy of your page when you're done for us to check out. Keep drawing, and take care.

F

Dear Esteemed Creators of Sketch Magazine:

Thank YOU! This magazine of yours has been a great buy...and so far I only have two issues! It's true, I have noticed that you still have a way to go before being perfect, but I am enjoying the fact that I have jumped onto the bandwagon and I am able to take part in seeing your little "baby" grow and develop into something beyond what you might have originally envisioned. Your mag is definitely a good read. I know how much you guys like to be praised and worshipped for all your efforts, but on to more serious matters...

One reason why I purchased your magazine was because you guys are answering the questions of those who are yearning to get into the business, and not only as art-

ists. As I look through the pages, so many questions come to mind. And I hope that you will take the time to answer them. Hopefully you haven't been asked these questions before. Before I get into the questions, let me first explain my situation. Here goes:

I have just recently graduated from the Art Institute of Phoenix with an Associates of Applied Science in Computer Animation. Now as great as this sounds, I am having a little difficulty in acquiring experience (a job) in my field. So as I continue my education in other subjects. I have decided to continue working on my portfolio as well as my own little comic book project. I know that there is little chance that I will become the next McFarlane, Tucci, Romita, Lee, Toriyama, or even Takahashi but I am willing to take the risk. However, there are so many things one needs to know before attacking a project so big, especially when I am working as a writer, penciler, inker, and letterer. So now that you know my predicament, on with the questions:

1. Copyright. What do I need to do in order to acquire a copyright for both my visual work as well as my story elements? I have already received the application forms for both the Visual Arts and Text from the Library of Congress Copyright Office. There is so much babble within these documents that I can't make heads or tails. I know I can ask a lawyer, but I just want to ask someone who is already out in the field first. Do I send a character layout sheet for each of the characters I have created to the Copyright Office? Or once I complete the pages of an issue, send that in instead? How else can I make sure that no one else takes my ideas and claim them as their own?

2. Lettering. How do I do lettering? I really would like to hand letter my own issues, but I am still an amateur in that respect. I don't know what the standards for lettering even is. What must the letters look like? What is the size of the letters when I ink them onto the illustration board (using the Ames Lettering Guide)? Do I even ink them directly onto the illustration board? If I decide to use the font that can be purchased from Blue Line, do I just scan in my artwork and type in the lettering onto the work? Or do I type the balloons on the computer, print them out, and then paste it onto my original work? What size should the font even be?

3. Process. It is difficult for anyone to get out into the field and be successful. What tips could you give me and others who are trying to get their projects off the ground? What is the best way to get independent work published? How much does it usually cost to get a couple issues printed? How many issues should be printed in order to get a good trial run from the readers? How can they be distributed without costing an arm and a leg? How many pages should be within a standard comic book? 28?30?32? How much money is usually invested in something like this?

4. Scripts. Can you show a standard script within the pages of your mag? Also, can you explain the standard layout of the script? Ex: Point out the dialogue, narration, issue number, page number, title, etc.

5. Coloring. I know that black and white comics are a lot cheaper to print then color, but I also like to dabble in this area. When colorists scan in their work, do they normally scan their work into an 8.5 by 11 scanner? Do they rebuild the work on the computer using the tools from programs like Photoshop and Painter? When colorists color, are they usually in CMYK format or are they using RGB? I know that in Photoshop, the only way you can use effects like LENS FLARE is if you are in RGB mode. So do they toggle back and forth? Do colorists make a color palette for each character?

Well, I guess that's it for now. I really want to fill out a classified and place it into your mag, but I'm not sure if I should do so yet. There are still some doubts and questions yet to be answered. So I hope you can answer these questions. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has them.

One more thing: Thanks for including interviews from professional artists/writers/colorists/letterers already in the field. It's nice to know that someone like Bill Tucci also struggled to make it in the field. Thanks again! And good luck with all your future issues. I'll be watching out for them.

Joel Portillo
Proud member of the Blue Line Club
Joel,
I'm going to answer these to the best of my knowledge.

1. Copyrighting isn't as difficult as it looks. See the Copyrights Office website at http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/. They have lots of info. For those who do not have web access, here's a brief note from their site.

The way in which copyright protection is secured is frequently misunderstood. No publication or registration or other action in the Copyright Office is required to se-cure copyright. (See following Note.) There are, however, certain definite advantages to registration. See "Copyright Registration."

Copyright is secured automatically when the work is created, and a work is "created" when it is fixed in a copy or phonorecord for the first time. "Copies" are material objects from which a work can be read or visually perceived either directly or with the aid of a machine or device, such as books, manuscripts, sheet music, film, videotape, or microfilm. "Phonorecords" are material objects embodying fixations of sounds (excluding, by statutory definition, motion picture soundtracks), such as cassette tapes, CDs, or LPs. Thus, for example, a song (the "work") can be fixed in sheet music ("copies") or in phonograph disks ("phonorecords"), or both.

If a work is prepared over a period of time, the part of the work that is fixed on a particular date constitutes the created work as of that date.

2. I know from experience that lettering on the computer is faster and easier to make changes. We use CorelDraw so we can keep the balloons and text separate from the artwork. Photoshop doesn't offer you the ability to manipulate the balloons like CorelDraw of FreeHand can.

3. I can't answer everything but you need to decide your page count, B&W or Color and then contact a printer for cost estimates. Page count usually breaks down in 8 or 16 pages (24, 32, 40 or 48). Cost depends on color, copies printed and kind of paper you print it on. You need to decide many things. Then contact a printer and give them what you want and they will tell what the minimum amount of copies they will print and at what cost.

4. Check out Sketch Magazine #2. Beau ran part of Wynonna Earp script.

5. Photoshop, PHOTOSHOP! It is the best for coloring comic pages. As far as techniques you need to keep checking Chris Riley's articles for some great tips on coloring comics.
Hopefully some of this helps.
Bob

Mr. Sizer,

Help! I don't know what to do! I read in Sketch Magazine #1 your article and it was right on the money. It's foolish to believe design and comic art can't go together. I need help sir. I'm 24 years old and have been trying to get into the comic book business for years now. I've gone through all the channels, from submissions, to

meeting people at conventions, and now I feel stuck. I'm getting no where fast. My whole life I've wanted to pencil comics and it has yet to happen. I can honestly say I am a good artist.

Should I be on Wizard's top ten list...probably not. Am I the next Alex Ross...I doubt it. I am however as good as a lot of professional comic book artists out there right now. For some reason though I'm having a hard time getting my foot in the door. If you can help in any way or give any type of advice I'd really appreciate it. Thank you so much.

Sincerely,
-Craig DeBoard
Dear Craig,

Hmmm, this is a tricky question.

My solution has been to make my own opportunities, rather than hope that other people will invent a job that I'm suited for. From a practical standpoint, I decided in college that my graphic design skills would provide me more access to jobs that I could rely on to pay the bills, and that comics was something that, while I loved to do it, would not always be burdened with bringing in the big bucks. This has been the solution for me, and it's kept me enjoying comics without cursing them when work wasn't coming in.

If you enjoy comics as much as you say, find ways to contribute to them in smaller ways than requiring a 9 to 5 job out of them. Not many comic artists live completely off of the comic work they do for the big companies (unless they happen to be in Wizard's top ten list.) My suggestion is to try and get jobs like doing pin-ups for other creators, contributing to anthologies from various companies, and helping out other like minded people that do work you respect. Work begets more work, and having as much published work under your belt shows people who are hiring that you can walk the walk.

As unglamorous as it sounds, they only way I've gotten where I have is by keeping at it, getting my stuff out in front of as many people as will look at it, going to conventions and hitting all the tables in Artist's Alley, meeting and showing to as many pros/editors as I can get to. Through persistance, I've been able to work with and get pin-ups for my book from people such as Geof Darrow, Chris Sprouse, Dave Johnson, Karl Altstaetter, Mark Crilley and Jeff Moy. so it is possible, even for a big goofball like me...

Paul Sizer

Greetings,
First of all, let me say what a breath of fresh air your magazine is and how timely it is as well. This kind of wisdom and insight is priceless. Never before has the casual or pre-professional artist had the opportunity to immerse himself in such a wealth of information and experience. For this, many others and I, thank you. I am very excited about each issue. I think your articles are great. The only complaints I have there are things you are already aware of, so I will forego mentioning these in detail. What I do want to mention in detail is who and what I would like to see in Sketch Magazine.

There are so many talented artists our there working now, but if I had to pick, this is whom I would choose (in order of preference):

1) Fred Perry (Gold Digger, Antarctic Press). Fred is the consummate creator/writer/artist. He is an exceptional talent whose work ethic and dedication to excellence comes through in every issue. Fred is also very personable and I think would be very amiable to an interview.

2) Bart Sears. I would like to know what happened to the Ominous Universe, if he has any plans to revive it at some point, if we might see any of those characters popping up at CrossGen and what his plans are for The First.

3) Jay Anacleto. Aria seems to be dead, but the art and story remain unmatched. I would love to know his background, how he developed his style, how he maintains his ability and what projects he is working on or developing. Will Aria continue?

4) Joe Benitez. His work on Weapon Zero was some of the best. That is where I first saw his work and was blown away.

5) Keron Grant. I'm not sure how well known Keron is, but his work on the oneshot comic "Gazillion" and his treatment of Kaboom have me hooked. I was very much looking forward to "Century". I hope to see his work somewhere soon.

6) Mike Allred. His work on Madman and now Atomics is some of the bests and most original material in the comics market today. He is one of the best creator/businessmen in the business.

7) Pat Lee. Pat Lee seemed to come out of nowhere. Dark Minds was HUGE and Warlands has delivered some really good stuff. His new projects seem to be headed for success. I would really like to know more about him and his development staff.

Articles I would like to see are these:

1. How to create character reference material (i.e. reference drawings, how to compare characters of different heights, mass, etc.) Along with this, how does one maintain scale?

2 How do you get a copyright, do you need copyright, things like that.

3. A brief outline of the production process from beginning to end. When should a script for a comic be completed before the next issue? When should storyboards for an issue be completed? When does the art and color need to be completed?

4. A listing of the basic supplies you need to get started. How many pens and/or pencils. What combination of hardness do you need? What are the best T-squares, templates and the like?

5. Articles on light and texture. How do you make somebody look old or what is the best way to draw leather.

6. I would also like to see something special like where a particular art/design/conceptual/placement problem is presented to the reader. The readers send in submissions of their solution to the problem and the best ones are then published in the magazine. One of the basic tenants of Sketch, it seems to me, is the sharing of ideas. I think this would not only promote sharing ideas, but it would stimulate problem solving and creativity.

Well, that's all I have for now. I really enjoy your magazine, and I wish you all the best. I hope Sketch continues to be a great success and that it continues to improve with each issue.

Regards,
-Damon Noland
Oklahoma City, Ok
Damon,

1. Check out "How To Draw Manga" from Antarctic press. He is one of the authors.

2. We are talking to Andy Smith who is currently inking Bart Sears work on his CrossGen series.

3., 4., 5., 6. Jay, Joe, Keron and Mike would all make a great interview.

7. Pat has been brought up in many of our jam sessions and I believe we will contact him very soon for an interview and feature.

1. Mitch did a very good job about this subject in Sketch #5.

2. See the letter above.

3. In the works.

4. We try to feature as many tools as possible.

5. I'll pass it along.

6. This magazine was created as a forum for creators to trade ideas and techniques. It's taking a while but it's catchin' on.

Thanks for your letter.

B.

Mr. Davis,

I saw your impressive lesson on composition and layout in "Sketch," and I had a few questions I wanted to ask you. Out of all the aspects of making comic book artwork, what do you feel is the most difficult or takes you the most time? Is it anatomy? Layout? Contrast? Perspective? Visual storytelling? Composition? Something other than any of those?

Please let me know what you think, and thanks very much for your time!

All the best,
Zig Holley

Hi Zig,

You've got a great name for a cartoonist by the way. Well thanks for your question. I've been sitting here thinking about it and my first reaction is that you can't really separate those functions very easily as I bet you'd get a different answer depending on who you asked.

Some guys can knock out a figure in no time, but struggle over just the right panel layout and storytelling. Others have a gift for dramatic layouts, but will struggle over just how to define the muscles on an arm or leg.

Personally I have days where my drawing comes easily in one area and slows down in others. Sometimes I get a "vision" of a panel layout that I just know it will work and can thumbnail it in no time. Then while I'm finishing up the page I'll draw and redraw a face, because I just can't get the eyes to look the way I want them to. It may be that I get too obsessed with detail that the average person might not see and should just move on. Practically, in the commercial art world or comic book world of real deadlines, you do have to just move on and accept certain mistakes.

Working fast is a definite plus, but I guess I cannot really see which function of drawing up a comic book page takes the most time. It's really up to you I think. If you find yourself struggling in one area or taking more time on one function then I guess that would be the one to try to bone up on in your spare time. Keep drawing (it is the only way to improve), and good luck!
-Dan Davis

Dear Mike,

I just wanted to thank you for including a shot of my home page in your recent article on Comics and The Internet in the recent issue of SKETCH magazine. It's an honor and a privilege to have one's work appear in such a great magazine (The extra hits couldn't hurt either). I love the ar-

ticles and art tips for the budding cartoonist in all of us. Keep up the great work.
Sincerely,
-Delfin Barral
WWW.BLACKEYECOMICS.COM

Thanks Delfin. I wanted to make sure I got I good variety on what's out there on the Web. I just check out your web-site and saw your new Odd Boy Flash. I loved it. Thanks for the plug as well.
M2

Dear Sir or Ma'am, (gotta be politically correct)

I'm an aspiring comic strip cartoonist, and was wondering if you had any plans to release any daily or Sunday comic strip, Blue Line pages? If not you probably should, since there are eight major newspaper syndicates and each one recieves about 5,000 to 6,000 submissions a year. That's a pretty good size market for a company like yours to maximize on! And you could be sure I would be the first on line or online (excuse the pun) to buy them. Well that's just my two cents.
Sincerly,
-Steve Oswald

Steve,

I just finished the new Blue Line Pro Comic Strip Boards. They should be on sale by this spring. Keep checking at www.bluelinepro.com for more information.
Bob

HOW DO YOU GET AN EDITOR OR PUBLISHER TO LOOK AT YOUR WORK? HOW DO YOU GET THEM TO REPLY BACK?
-SCOTT WALL
GLEN BURNIE MD.

Not by typing everything in caps and bold. You need to come across more professional then that.
Bob

I was wondering, what are some of the most common art programs that the professional use to color their artwork?
-Juan Jackson

PhotoShop seems to be the most popular. It offers many features that a colorist for comics can use to their benefit.
Bob

Staff of Sketch,

I would like to tell you what a great magazine you guys are putting out!!! Keep it up. I did miss #1 and #2, is their any way to obtain them? Thanks
-Dean

Thanks. Sketch #2 can be purchased from us. We only have a few #1's available, so they are only offered to subscribers of Sketch until they are gone.
Bob

Hello there.

I just wanted to write in and say that this magazine is, for lack of a better term, FANTASTIC!!! It's wonderful, and imaginative and, most importantly, informative!!! As I want to go into comic books as a career, I find this magazine essential. Where else can I get tips from the pros like Brian Michael Bendis, and read about the artists that I greatly respect like Michael Turner? Where else can I find tips on laying out pages, to inking, to writing to digital coloring? Nowhere but here. I just want to thank you all, and say that you guys are doing a bang-up job.
-Lester Paredes

Thanks Lester. We appreciate the kind words. If you ever feel the need to write, we are always looking for hype statements like that. Once again, thanks.
M2

I have to say Bob - it had seemed like forever since I had received my last issue I was afraid you guys had gone out of business and I had paid a full subscription for two issues...glad to hear that's not the case.
-?

We are well and flourishing. Thanks for the concern.
Bob

Hello,

I'm not sure if I'm sending this to the right person, but I thought that if I wasn't it could be past along. You see, I have a question, a comment, and a complaint.

Question: How do I order the book "Powerlines" that I saw advertised in issue 5 of "Sketch", off of the internet? I am lazy and don't want to fill out the order form and mail it.

Comment: "Sketch" is the best art magazine of all time! I know it's only going to get better to. You should expand the format to include more pages though. It leaves me too thirsty for more awesome information.

Complaint: I know this doesn't really involve Blueline, but WHAT THE HELL HAPPENED TO STRATHMORE SERIES 400 ART BOARDS!!!!! They have this stupid little imprinted symbol on the bottom right corner that messes up the artwork. What were they thinking? It's printed on every single sheet and I ordered

3 pages of 20 without seeing it. I have been buying these pages for months now and the symbol was never there before. What the *!! Okay, I'm done now.

Thank you.

-Ray

Ray,

Powerlines will be offered on the new website when it goes on-line or you can call us at 859-282-0096.

Bob

I like what you guys are doing, but I have one thing to say why is it that you and other magazines that try to promote the comic industry only seem to REALLY care about the big money making machines that pour out the same regurgitated crap month in and month out. Yeah know independents will receive a small side bar column slated down in the bottom corner of a page once in a while, especially if they are people who left one of the bigger companies to persue a creative path of their own. And that is the biggest bull about this industry. WHAT ABOUT US, the independents that NO one has heard of, unless some big company is about to bring them under their wing, I hear everyone talking about saving this business, and none of you are really trying to promote the independents, you ever think that maybe why comics are half way to the morgue. Times and TASTES change. What was done in the early 90's is over because we were sick of the industry cramming the same story, told different ways down our throats, this industry believes they only need to tell GREAT stories when the "zombies"(us) stop drulling on their books. "Indies" on the other hand are putting out some ground-breaking stuff, and no ones seeing it, either because Marvel, DC, or the other so- called "Indies"like Image, didn't hire him, because they planned on bringing in thier, no talent brother- in laws or best friends from college, or the magazines that make their living off comics aren't strongly promoting any of it, because, the "big boys"paid lots of money to advertise every one of their crappy books. And so the book that could have brought in a new wave of fans, for all the predators to feed off of , the crap books just drove them away, and they do it over and over till they squeeze every dime out of that book, but don't worry cause they got another one on the way to take it's place. Comics are no longer surviving because they need New, Fresh blood that isn't DC's Presidents daughters new boy-friend coming to draw, ask around the offices and find out how the Top Dogs broke-in to comics, They probably had a friend who knew Stan Lee.

Lets see some more interviews and previews for the "Indies".

A GETTING-BORED FAN,

-JON MALIN

Jon

Sorry you're getting bored – I know the feeling.

Sketch certainly supports the independent market (by the way, a friend recently turned me on to Johnny The Homicidal Maniac, and it's great); we're planning features and talking to independent creators just like we do with everyone at those scary big mainstream companies – although, truth be told, many of them contact us, and in a professional, courteous fashion. I'm curious, Jon – though not overly – do you work in the independent market, or are you a fan?

Good luck.

F

Dear Sketch,

I just finished issue #4 and once again the talents at Sketch have turned out one killer magazine and a congratulations is definitely in order. I don't waste my time on drivel and not one article reeked. Ever since I first picked up your mag at the San Diego Comic Con your articles have really matured with interviews that reveal tips, techniques while paying attention to your readers. Thanks for asking those tip questions!

Concerning issue #4 I really enjoyed the interview with Terry Beatty and I was wondering if in a future issue you could show pictorially how red lining is done. I've got a clear picture I think but I'd like to be sure. However, there is something that aspiring artists out there need to know from when I hit the San Diego ComicCon this year and met with some higher ups from Marvel, DC, and Dark Horse. Some of the critiques I got gave me some good advice, some didn't, but always walk away thinking what did I just learn

Before you get a critique ask yourself do you have enough brains to decipher the difference from someone who doesn't want to look at another submission and so they crap on the next person in line to someone who is trying to really help me make it. There are plenty of pencilers out there who didn't want to look at another page of art or who were tired of dashing someone's dreams of breaking into comics despite their delicate approach. Believe in yourself, if you don't then forget it. (Please feel free to clear this up if I'm mistaken on any point.)

While it is common for pencilers to "x" areas that are to be black out, do not do it when you send in your submission. They like to see finished pages. An editor sees hundreds of submissions a week. So, it makes sense that out of those he/she will only respond to those who look like they put some effort into penciling a page. A penciler might come across lazy if their pages are just mark with a bunch of "x's." Besides, the proper usage of black areas on a paper can be really powerful and might be the deciding factor between you and John Doe. Always put your best foot forward. Once you get the job then "x-ing" is acceptable.

Another tip I got at the Comic Con is don't cut your pages down to size. Pencilled pages are reduced from 10"x15" however most of us draw on 11"x14"or 14"x17" pads of bristol. Once the page is measured out, DO NOT USE THE BORDERS TO TEST YOUR PENS. While this area will be cut away and not be seen in print, it will make turn your pages into more of a mess. Cleanliness scores points. Anyone who uses Rapidograph pens knows they are tempermental and to get a clean line I always test a pen to see if it's going to give the line I want, besides I had planned on cutting away this area before slipping them into my portfolio. When I showed my pages, they immediately said, "OK, you want to use the right size paper." And while I had, the paper looked smaller. It would seem to me that the job of an editor is a busy one and they are most likely not going to measure a page to see if the proportions are correct. So put your best foot forward. Use a piece of scrap paper to test those pens.

Also, don't play up "your" style. Remember, you're trying (like me) to get a job, we are nobodies right now except serious fans who love to draw. We don't have a style that is marketable because we haven't been introduced into the market. Yet, oddly enough this is what many of the Indy artists thought. Most of them had a graphitti style similar to mine and the common thought was, "If you have a style before you get in, you're not going to get in. Once you're in THEN you've got a style." I had done a 5-page story of Superman in a Animated Series/Anime type style and I was shot down. I had totally missed the boat on panel hierarchy despite the fact that I was trying to pay attention to storytelling. That was a valu-

able tip. I'd been more concerned with style and in doing so made some serious mistakes that I might have noticed otherwise. Look at it like this, while you may think you're hot the editor is not willing to risk his job or the image of a company character just because you did 5 pages. More than likely they'll play it conservatively since money is on the line. So what then should a page contain? Simple.

Display your ability to draw anatomy and clothing on anatomy, use perspective, and ask yourself, is there an establishing shot on the page. If your hero is flying over the city have you grounded him by letting his foot touch the bottom of the panel (big NO NO). Lastly, ask yourself if this panel is so important why is it so small?

This is just what I learned out there and hopefully it will help some one else and hopefully some day we'll be drawing comics. Thanks again Sketch for printing a mag which will definitely make breaking into comics a little easier.

Thanks,
-Wes

Wes,

Thanks for taking the time and effort to share your experiences. Your letter is what I had envisioned this letters column to offer an arena for creators and fans to share thier experiences.

Bob

Blueline,

I am a budding young artist brimming with comic book ideas. The problem is I have little knowledge of the comic book industry and even a smaller knowledge of the "how to". I was wondering if there is such a thing as a comic book lay out application for my Macintosh computer, or are the standard Adobe applications used? Will you please give me any information regarding my question? Also, if I can use Photoshop or Illustrator please send me a list of instruction books on the subject, or how to find them.

Thanks for reading my questions,
Ryan J Davis

Ryan

I'm not sure that I follow. Are you wanting to design your comic in your computer? I'm not aware of any lay out application or books.

Bob

Beau-

First off, shame on you for encouraging people to go into comics in your great magazine, "Sketch"! Just kidding. Anyway, it's great to know that a few of the "gang"

are still involved in the Biz, the Industry, or whatever the kids are calling it these days. Drop us a line sometime, Happy New Year, etc.

-Chaz

Good to hear from you, amigo. Long time no see your ugly mug.

Sounds like you haven't lost your witty humor. Yeah, I'm still here in comics and toys. They haven't found a way to pry me loose yet. They try, but my kung fu is too strong.

The Sketch is great. I see you have not lost a bit of your talent. I know few that can match your flair for real man stuff and great barbarians. Your talent for drawing babes has always been incredible.

As I type this I am looking at a great signed baseball that I had you and my other buddies' sign back at Chicago Comic Con in 1991. It sits here on my desk to remind me who the good guys are. Back when real men ruled comics!

Let me know if ya need anything, Chaz. Live by the fist!
-Beau Smith

I am starting to use your products for the first time. Could you Please explain what the non-photo blue ink means.

Thanks,

Non-blue ink is a light blue ink that doesn't reproduce when photographed on a stat camera.

Bob

Before I begin, let me just say that your magazines has proved incredibly valuable to me as an artist and comic creator.

I've developed a comic book called Yakuza Girl. I have the first story arch written, pencilled and inked (basically, ready to go). Before I make my first move though, I'd like to get it trademarked and copyrighted. The problem is that I have no idea how to go about doing that. Is there anyway to get a trademark and copyright on a creative work without hiring expensive attorneys or working for a corporation like Marvel. If so, I greatly appreciate some information.

Thanks, a lot
-V Joe Destefano

Check out the copyright and trademarks website at http://lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/
Bob

Hey Guys,

I'm just writing to tell you guys that I appreciate your magazine. I'm trying to do my own thing here in the world of comics and have found no other publication or ser-

vice anywhere near as usefull. Nothing else comes close.

Between great interviews from a great writer/artist in Brian Michael Bendis and David Mack (which contained actual creative information, not just fluff), great articles about writing, drawing, inking and coloring and just about any other valuable comic related information. You guys actual helped me advance and grow as far as comic creation is concerned.

Thanks a lot guys,
Victor Destefano

Victor
Thats what Sketch is all about.
Bob

Hey Chris;

Let me start by saying that I truly enjoy your columns in the sketch magazine. And by the way where were you in issue #5? Well, I would like to know what would be the best to submit my coloring samples. For example, I can draw a little bit, but not enough to make my own images and then take them to PhotoShop; could scan any black and white comics and use them as submissions or would they consider that illegal as far copyrights and such? Pleased let me know and keep up the good work.

Thanks;
-Z.

Always try to use the most professional illuatrations as possible. Just remember if you use an creators artwork that you can't not publish your coloring to sale. You can print copies to give out as samples.
Bob

Mr. Corroney:

After reading the article about you in SKETCH magazine, I visited your website and greatly enjoyed your work. I'm an aspiring inker, and was wondering if you would be able to e-mail or send me some copies of your pencilled sequential art for me to practice on and create samples from. (I did try to copy the files from the page, but you were one step ahead of me....) As you mentioned in the article, you certainly do make it easy on your inkers; your pencils are extremely clear, superbly composed and very distinct in terms of line weight. I'd very much like to see what I might be able to do with them, if at all possible. Thank you very much for considering my request.

Sincerely,
-Peter J. Romeo

Hi Peter,
Thanks for picking up Sketch and I'm glad you enjoy my work. I could email you

some of my penciled pages for inking samples but the pages would not be full size. Most likely you would have to print them out at the 8.5x11 inch size I have them scanned at and then enlarge them on a Xerox to use for inking at full size. You will lose *some* quality in the pencils through this second-generation method. Though it shouldn't be too much of a loss since as you mentioned I keep my pencils pretty clear and tight anyway. If you want me to snail mail you some full size Xerox copies let me know and we'll work something out. Regardless, I'd love to see your inks on my pencils once you completed the samples.

Good Luck!

-Joe

Joe,

I just wanted to drop ya a line and tell ya keep up the great work with Sketch magazine. Even though I have been a pro in the business for over ten years, it's always cool to see magazines that cater to what we do for a living. Besides, we are never too old or good to learn new things. Anyways, keep up the great work, and feel free to pass my URL on to Chris Riley. I'd love to talk coloring with him.

-Rob Schwager

Hi Rob

I'm honored that a professional like yourself can appreciate the tips and insight into the industry that I have to offer along with the rest of the Sketch crew. I feel even the best professionals should carry themselves as students if they expect to advance their art further and in the process learn more about themselves and others. I'm always learning and growing as an artist as I do my best to pay attention to what others are saying or doing, especially the students I teach in my comic book illustration class. Good luck with your art

career and keep reading Sketch!

-Joe

Dear Mr. Joe Corroney,

I am a student in the U.K., studying film and T.V. I am currently writing my dissertation on comic book adaptations. My first chapter looks in to this subject in depth, the rest of the dissertation looks at how I would adapt the comic 'Sam and Twitch' to film. I need to get as much information on adaptations as possible - if you can help in anyway - whether it be your own opinion on past / present adaptations, links to other sites, books you think would help absolutely everything and anything! I would appreciate a reply - either way! If you are interested in helping, maybe I could contact you with a more in-depth interview?

Thank you for your time

Claire Bee

Hi Claire

As much as I'd like to help I'm not sure what kind of advice I could give to you on adapting comic books for the screen since I haven't had experience doing that myself. I've had plenty of experience reading such adaptations and a few contacts that have had experience working on them. As much as I love to write, I work primarily as a comic artist and could most likely give advice and help to you on the visual aspect of the medium. I do have a contact who works for Image and Todd McFarlane himself who could most likely point you in a better direction and probably give you lots of advice since he's a pro in this arena. You should contact Beau Smith at Parts@sacredstudios.com He's a writer for a variety of comic publishers like Image and Dark Horse and has adapted his own comic series, Parts Unknown, for a possible film version. If you are still interested in interviewing me for possibly hearing the

opinions on adaptations from a professional artist in the industry, just let me know and we can work something out.

Good Luck,

Joe

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Rapheal Brown and I am an aspiring comic book writer/artist. I have an excellent idea for a self-published book being incarcerated has its drawbacks. I will be incarcerated until January of 2003 but with family and friend support I shall be successful. Your magazine is great and an often-used reference of mine. In Issue #1 Dan Sauder wrote an article on self-publishing and kept referring to an attached address book for copyright info and printers addresses. I received no such thing. Is there any way you can send me this? I would be very appreciative.

Thanks for your help.

-R-

That article you are referring to was an excerpt from "A Guide to the Comic Book Business" by Dan Souder. The addresses you're talking about were included in the book. We're very sorry for any misunderstandings this may have caused. It is available though our catalog though.

M2

Dear Mr. Hickey:

I just received the first issue of Sketch Magazine from Bud Plant Comic Art and I love it! I am an aspiring artist who has a lot of time to learn the trade. I am also a writer. As soon as I can get caught up on the back issues I am going to get myself a subscription to your magazine. Thank you for being the resource that can help me get on track to a positive career.

Sincerely,

Patrick Williams

No problem Patrick. That's why Sketch is here.

Bob

by Don Stephenson

# PROFESSIONAL ARTWORK SAMPLES FOR DIGITIAL COLORIST

Attention all colorists! Have those scintillating schemes of chroma and hue dancing through your color-fevered head at all times of the day and night? Have your Photoshop all heated up and your Magic Wand ready to wave? Have your Prismacolors at hand? Are your Martin's dyes glittering like jewels in their bottles, ready to spread their translucent air of exotic excitement to some amazing artwork? You're all sweaty-psyched and ready to go to work, right? But...where's the art you need to wow the world with your color genius going to come from? Are you tired of waiting for that latest batch of poor fourth generation copies to come from that major publisher you hounded? Tired of dogging your gonna-be-a-penciller pals for handouts or copies while they work feverishly at coping the look of the latest anime sensation? Besides...is it just you, or do their penciled pages always look a lot better than the final inks you've cooled your heels so long to get?

Well, if you're tired of begging and waiting for the art you need to perform your palette wizardry and you want to strut your stuff on the coolest of possible pages, just stop by your local comic book store. With the recent interest in affordable trade paperbacks of past treasures like silver age Marvel stories and collected volumes of a wide variety of genre material, you're fortunate in the fact that your comic store now offers you a huge amount of stuff to color. You now have an open door to a huge archive of comic art to work with, almost all of it material you would never had the ability to access before! You can now pick and choose artists and subject matter that best suit your personal abilities and interests. And the great part is that all the art you want to work on is in wonderful black-and-white, just ready to be scanned.

From some of the masters of the form you might not be fortunate enough to be familiar with beyond these trade collections, to many of the current superstars everyone enjoys, you have a terrific selection. Just take a look at Marvel's Essential Collections of Spider-man, X-Men and Wolverine, in these volume are some of the hottest illustrators to ever grace a page with a pencil. There's Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Dave Cockrum, John Byrne, Mark Silvestri, George Perez, Andy Kubert, Mark Texiera and Dwayne Turner to name just a few. And don't stop there, check out some of the latest releases by Top Cow such as Witchblade and Aphrodite that are being re-released in black and white on nice glossy paper. Hit the back issues for Essential Swampthing, Sandman and other books that DC has re-offered. And if you're a major-publisher fan, you really should check out those companies that are always producing black and white fare such as Bone, Liberty Meadows, Love and Rockets, and many more. There are some terrific independents out there that have a lot to offer, don't overlook them.

So, when's the last time an aspiring colorist could study, practice and learn from such an amazing array of artistry? Care to learn how to properly display an amazing combination of basic story-telling elements and incredible raw energy – try your hand on the "King", Kirby! Want to figure out how to properly handle and accentuate the delicate and complex renderings of top-of-the-line "art" comics? Now you can study the delightful intricacies of David Finch as you please. Face it, there's never been a better time to begin the career of a colorist when it comes to source material, taste, and the opportunity to learn. So quit waiting and moping, and get out there and color. Just remember that when using or displaying your color work, use care. Don't forget that copyright holders own their characters, and without securing permission you cannot publish any of the artwork other than as samples to send to publishers.
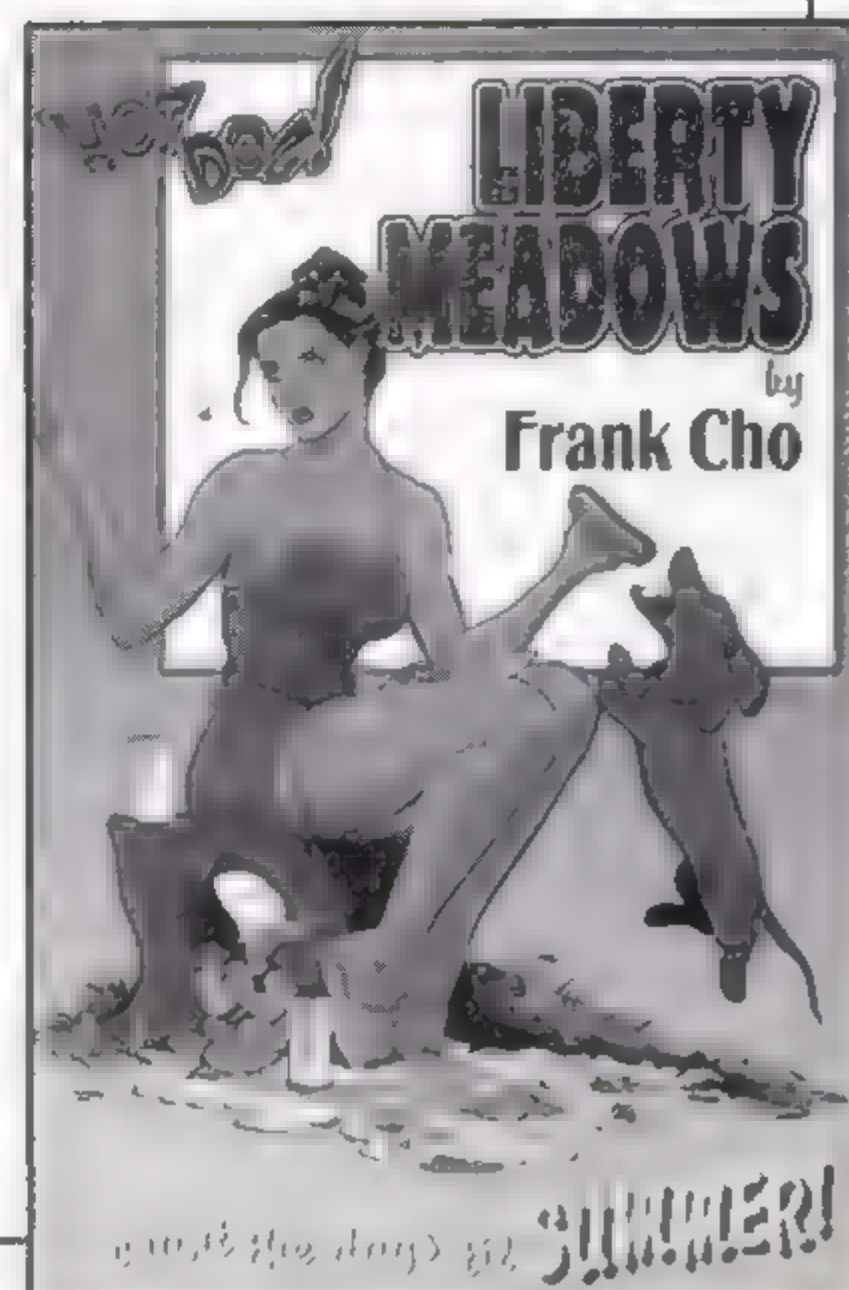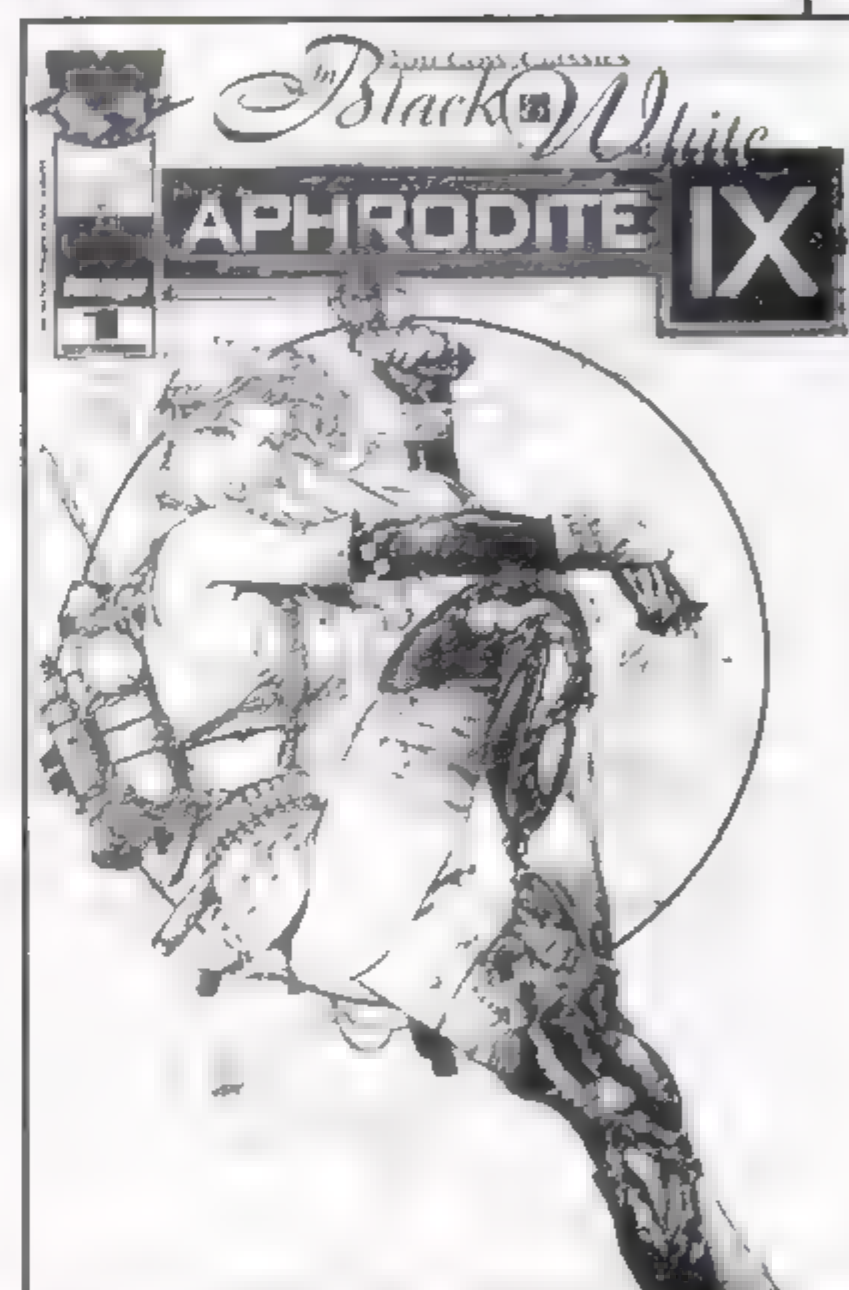
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

TOP COW

Please send all submissions to:
Att: Submissions Editor
Top Cow Productions, Inc.
10390 Santa Monica Blvd. #110
Los Angeles CA, 90025

If Top Cow is interested in your portfolio, you WILL be contacted. It is however, impossible to respond back to every submission that we receive.

Content:

Please send photocopies of your work, as no original artwork will be returned. Include a resume of past work, education, etc. Include only your best material. It is always a plus to include Top Cow characters in your submission. We recommend showing 3 to 4 pages of good story telling using sequential panels.

Go through the following check list before you submit your portfolio for review:

1) Include only your best work.
2) Show your grasp of dynamic anatomy.
3) Show your ability to draw ALL types of people, faces and expressions.
4) Show your grasp of perspective.
5) Show us detailed backgrounds.
6) Do not send pin-ups —tell us a story!

If your work includes all of these things, we would love to see it!

Does Top Cow accept writing submissions and/or story ideas?

Currently, it is extremely difficult to get work as a writer for Top Cow. This is because most of our titles are written in-house by their creators, and these individuals are not currently seeking other writing contributions. When Top Cow IS in need of a writer for an existing property, the company will usually go to an established writer within the industry.

If you are a talented writer with something unique to contribute to the world of Top Cow, the company is always interested in seeing your work. Top Cow will keep it on file, and should the need for your talents arise we will contact you.

Any unsolicited materials regarding new properties are not accepted.

What are my chances of getting work at Top Cow?

Hold your work up to the art found in a Top Cow comic book. We know your friends and family say that you are a great artist, but does it look like it will fit nicely into one of our books? If the answer is yes - rush that glorious art over to our studio as soon as you can! We want to see it!! But, if the answer is no - do not get discouraged, simply practice, practice, practice! Take art classes, and draw every day. Someday, if the desire and talent is there, you too will become "super-talented".

DARK HORSE

Dark Horse is interested in finding and promoting new talent. However, due to the volume of unsolicited submissions Dark Horse receives, we ask that you adhere to the following guidelines:

Do not send scripts or story proposals for any title currently being published by Dark Horse. Dark Horse's agreements with its licensors and creators prohibit Dark Horse editors from reading such submissions. Such submissions will be returned unreviewed, or will be destroyed if not accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope with sufficient postage.

Feel free to draw Dark Horse characters for art samples you intend to submit.

Never send original art. Send photocopies only. Make sure the photocopies you send are clean and sharp and easy to "read." Be sure that each page has your name, address, and phone number clearly written somewhere on it.

Please do not make telephone calls to follow up on your samples. Please do not fax or e-mail submissions of any kind. Faxed or e-mailed submissions will be immediately discarded. We do not review web sites.

Writers: You can find writer's guidelines and the submission agreement here.

Pencillers: If you're sending finished work (fully penciled and inked), include copies of the original penciled pages before they were inked. If you want to show full-color work, send color photocopies. You may also include tear sheets of previously printed work. There is a sample script from which to work, available in Rich Text Format (RTF), Microsoft Word 97/98, Microsoft Word 6.0, or Adobe Acrobat (PDF) format.

Consider carefully what you are sending. An editor wants to see that you can draw sequential art, not pinups. Five or six consecutive story pages is

usually adequate. Include quiet scenes as well as action, utilize a wide variety of faces, figures (male, female, normal people as well as "super" characters, etc.), and well-realized settings. Ask yourself the following questions: Does the angle you've chosen take full advantage of the dramatic potential in a scene? Do the backgrounds establish where the characters are in relationship to their surroundings and to each other? Is there a well-defined foreground, middleground, and background? Is there a clear, readable story even without word balloons or captions? Have you left adequate room for the dialogue and captions?

Inkers: Include copies of the original pencils before they were inked.

Colorists: You may photocopy up to eight pages of Dark Horse's current B&W work onto white paper for coloring samples only. Send color photocopies of your work. Never send originals.

What to expect: Your work will either be kept on file for reference or destroyed. If an editor is inter-ested in your work, then she or he will probably contact you by phone, provided your phone number is included with your submission. Unfortunately, due to the volume of submissions Dark Horse receives, we don't have time to critique your work. If you're looking for constructive criticism, show your work to industry professionals at conventions or to friends who can be trusted to give you an honest opinion. An editor's job is to find creators who can produce publishable work. If you think you have the talent, desire, and professionalism to make it in comics, then give it your best shot. You have nothing to lose by trying.

Send your submissions to:
Submissions
Dark Horse Comics
10956 SE Main, Milwaukie, OR 97222

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Publisher submission Information was supplied by thier web sites. All content is copyrighted by each publisher.
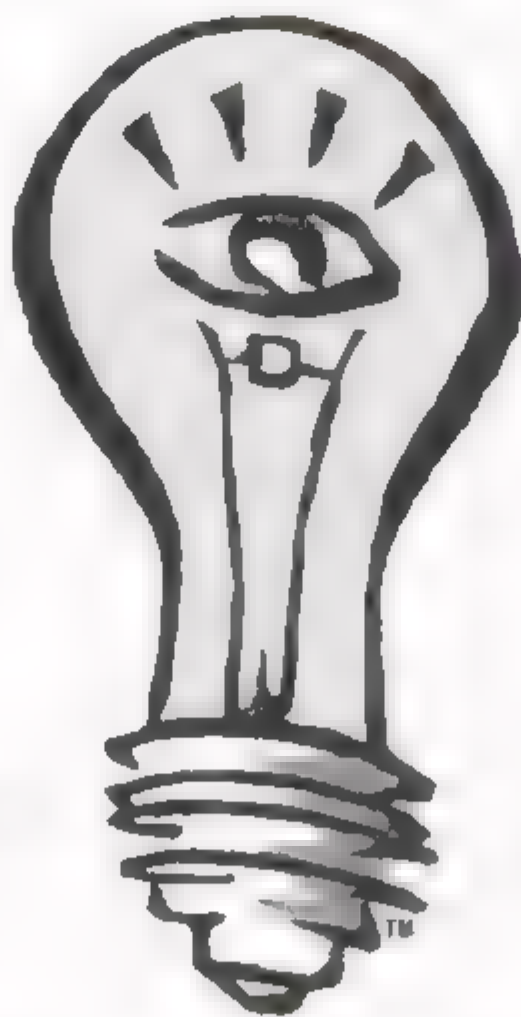
BEHIND THE PANELS:
The Art of Trading Card Illustration

by Joe Corroney

Between the time of the Silver Age when comic books cost twelve cents and the decline of the mighty empire in the nineties, there was an age undreamed of. And onto this, Joe Corroney was destined to carry the gilded steel of the mechanical pencil with a troubled brow. From the dawn of 1973 he came; moving silently down through the years, creating many secret artworks, struggling to reach the time of the deadline; when the few illustrators who remain will battle to the last. No one has ever known he was among you ...until now. It is this, Sketch magazine, who alone can tell thee of his saga. Let us hear of the days of high adventure!

This issue we'll take a look at what I like to call the "red-headed stepchild" industry to the big brother comic book phenomenon. The industry I'm referring to - which doesn't always get the respect it deserves from illustrators and the like, though it can be just as fun and lucrative as comic books - is the role-playing game industry, specifically the collectible card game arena. Pull up a stool and grab a tall mug of Glenmorangie, but keep your trusty steel by your side... this business can be a little rough. We'll pull back the wizard's veil and reveal the secrets and creation process of my professional trading card illustration for Microsoft's Age of Empires ccg and White Wolf's Rage CCG.

There Can be Only One.

Trying to make a living as an illustrator I often ask myself, "Freelancer, what is good in life?"

Most times I answer, "Crush your enemies, see them driven before you, hear the lamentations of the women, and receive steady paychecks", but not always in that order. So what's an illustrator to do when the comic book companies aren't always calling on you? When you need to keep the money coming in and still find other avenues to utilize your creative skills besides flipping burgers, role-playing game companies aren't a bad place to start. Besides giving you official reasons for drawing things you used to get in trouble for in high school, these companies can usually be dependable when wanting a paycheck for your creative illustration talents (and possibly warped imagination as well). Especially if you're trying to make a name for yourself as an illustrator when just starting out.

Let's face it, everybody and their brother wants to draw comic books.

With so many established artists competing for the work as more and more publishers are going under or cutting back on their titles, the work can become real competitive real quick. Comic books aren't the only place to draw superheroes, monsters, aliens and scantily clad women in distress, Bub.

Working in this gaming field was not only beneficial for me to express my imagination (or get my creative fix), but it allowed me to explore a variety of techniques as an illustrator. Not only could I hone my comic art penciling techniques, but it allowed me to develop and progress my pen and ink and both full color traditional and electronic techniques as well. In other words, I expanded my horizons as an artist and didn't draw myself into a corner just as a penciler. With each new company and assignment I had new techniques I discovered or strengthened to fall back on, which

allowed me to pursue other similar media to comic book storytelling.

As an illustrator, first and foremost what I enjoy about my job is the chance to tell stories. Besides comic books, interior illustrations, covers, and trading cards are some of the areas I tackle for the variety of gaming companies that give me work.

Photoshop is Stronger Than Steel.

The first opportunity I had to illustrate trading card artwork was for White Wolf's Rage ccg. White Wolf is a company primarily known for its horror themed role-playing games, and this particular ccg was based off their popular Werewolf-The Apocalypse gaming line. At the time of this assignment I had just begun illustrating for this company, though I had freelanced for a variety of other gaming companies before, including West End Games' Star Wars rpg. This is where I first experimented in electronic coloring techniques for a series of interior character cards for the Star Wars game book Platt's Smuggler Guide. Since I had previous experience in Photoshop and Painter, I was confident I could create some nifty lookin' werewolf art in howlin' full color.

Soon contracts were signed, deadlines and payment agreed upon, and I was penciling and inking away to create line art that I could scan into my computer and begin coloring digitally. The following illustrations (Examples A, B, and C) are some examples of my Rage ccg artwork. On the following page you can refer to the step by step side bar that dissects the creation process in more detail for one of my Rage cards, from thumbnail sketch to final printed card.
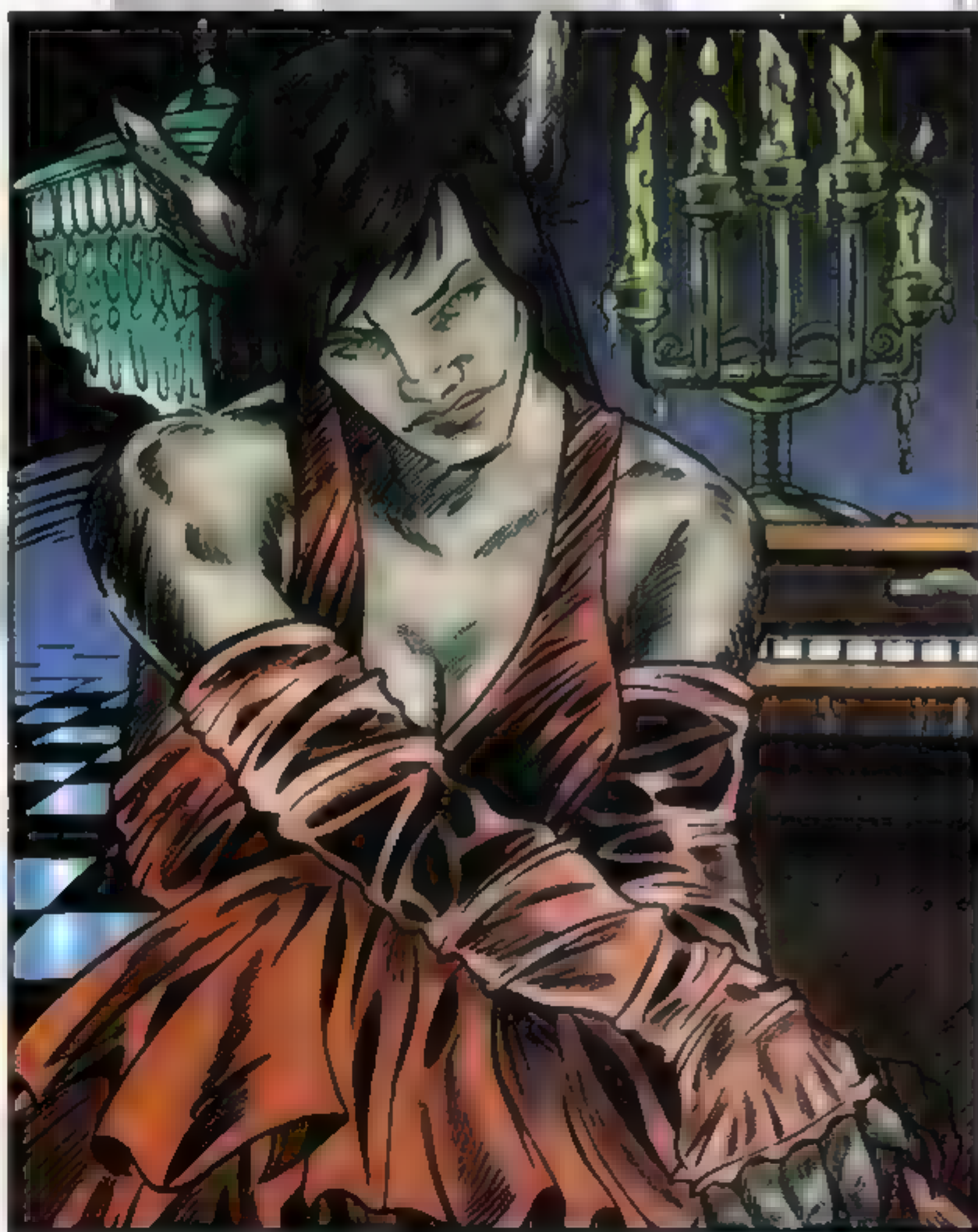
Artwork

Card

The Stages of Rage

Example A

Example B

1) This sketch (Ex. A) is my initial concept design for the following art notes I received from my art director...
   "Card #889-g   Show a drunken garou (nasty looking werewolf) standing at a bar with a large mug of beer in his hand. He wears an eyepatch over one eye."

2) The following illustration (Ex. B) is the completed line art I created in pen and ink after my initial sketch was approved. This artwork is completed at just over 6 by 8 inches, though I'm keeping in mind it will eventually be reduced to around 2 by 3 inches for the final printed piece.

3) At this stage I scan the pen and ink artwork full size into my Macintosh computer as a 300 d.p.i line art document. Opening this file in Photoshop, I touch up some of the inking and clean parts of the drawing in general using the eraser tool. I crop the artwork and convert it to a grayscale file before saving it as a RGB color Tiff file. After closing out of Photoshop, I reopen the artwork in Painter 4 and then click the Edit menu option and drag down to Mask, then highlight Image Luminance. This masks my black line art. Before I begin painting and rendering behind the black line though, I have to go down to the bottom left hand corner of my window and click and drag from the brown drawing mask icon to the second one that shows the drawing icon masked in the center.

   Now I begin rendering my illustration using the various brushes in Painter. In my Brush Control: Size window, found in the Brushes palette, I can change the angle, squeeze, and tip of my brush to achieve various strokes and effects with the paint.

   Some of the other tools I use in completing the rendering on this werewolf are the Dodge and Burn tools. These tools can be found in the Brushes palette in Painter, and I use them to lighten and darken the tones of the werewolf's fur and clothing. I adjust the opacity of my paint and size of my brushes also, using my Options palate in Painter.

   Finally the artwork is now finished (Ex. C), and I save it to a zip disk to Fed-Ex to my art director along with the rest of the cards I completed for this set.

4) Once the artwork is sent to my art director it is formatted for the final layout design in-house, and sent to the printer resulting in the final image (Ex. D).

Example C

Example D

What Is a Paintbrush Without the Hand That Wields It?

Last year another opportunity to illustrate for a collectible card game presented itself to me. The project was for a new ccg based on the widely popular Microsoft video game, Age of Empires. I'm always wanting to brush up on my traditional painting techniques, so I broke out my tubes of acrylic and brushes and jumped head first into this new project. I chose a traditional technique as opposed to my comic art style I painted electronically for my Rage cards.

For these illustrations, I was working from photo reference of actual models in costumes that posed for these drawings. This approach lent itself to a more realistic modeled feel for the characters and environment, often seen in the fantasy illustration genre.

While in art college I was fortunate enough to learn traditional painting techniques from the various illustration and painting courses I had taken. Though I enjoy cartooning and working often in a comic art style, it was my training in school as an illustrator more specifically that allowed me to be successful. I found learning strong design skills, color sense, and various techniques were all equally important for me to adapt to the required technique on my various projects I chose.

Finished Colored Artwork
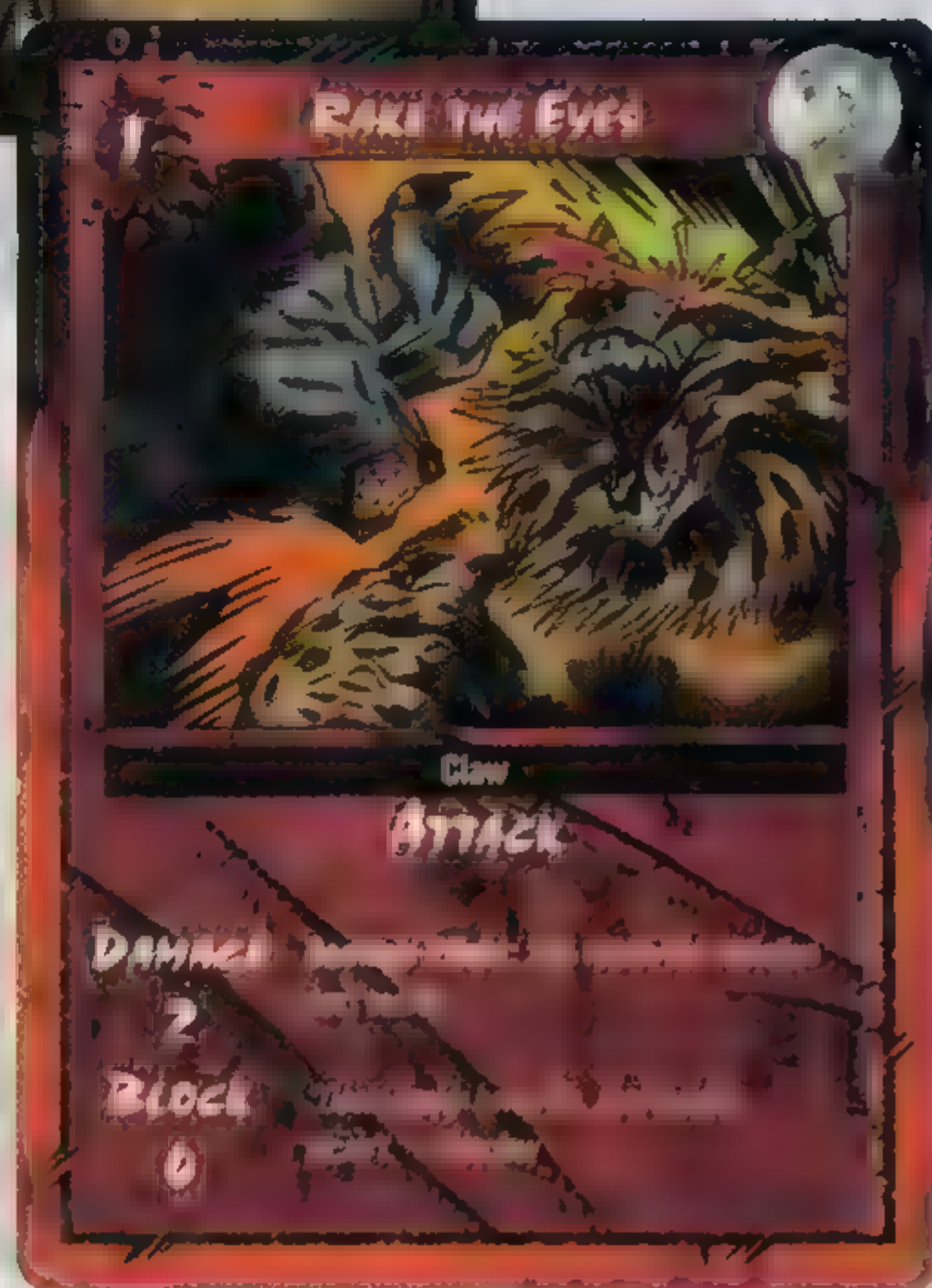
Printed Card

The Levels of an Empire

Example A

1) Along with the previously provided photo reference I received from my client, the following illustration is an example (Ex. A) of the line art for these sets of cards that I had to render in full color.

2) Here we see some of the completed artwork of the cards (Ex. B, C, and D), including the final rendered from the previous pencil art for the client. Using a variety of Windsor Newton brushes and my trusty Liquitex acrylics, I painted right on top of these pencils drawn on 2 ply vellum bristol board.

I often work from a light to dark technique, and keep my acrylics thin and very translucent like watercolors at first. Gradually I build up to thicker, more opaque layers and brighter or darker colors of paint, and then finally add my highlights. Usually my whitest highlights are the final touches I add to my paintings.

These paintings were completed at just over 6 by 7 inches, though they will eventually be reduced to around 2 inches square for the final printed piece. It's often best to work larger than the final printed dimensions to allow for tighter detail. Also, the piece can usually look even sharper when reduced to be printed.

3) As usual, the artwork is sent to my art director once it's approved and formatted by designers for the card layout. This final image (Ex. E) is the result of an actual game card with my artwork upon return from the printer.
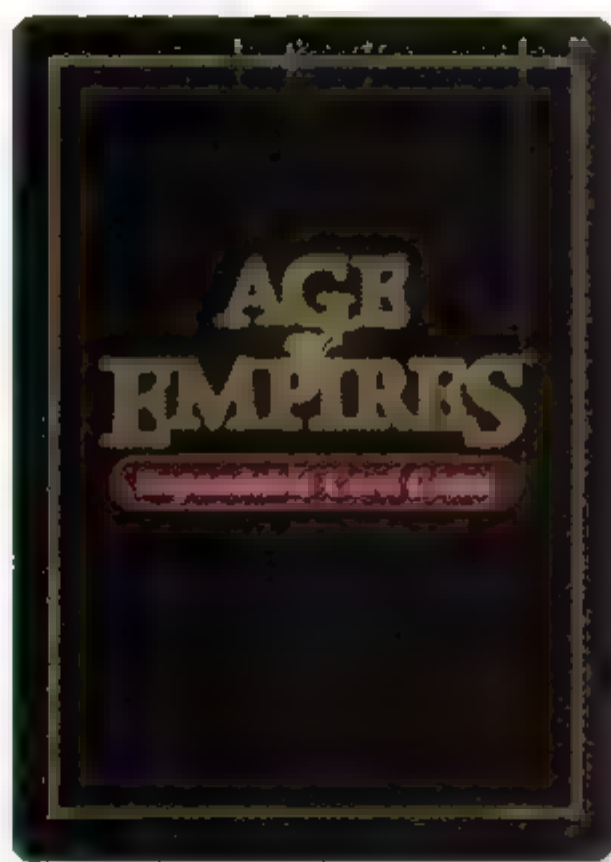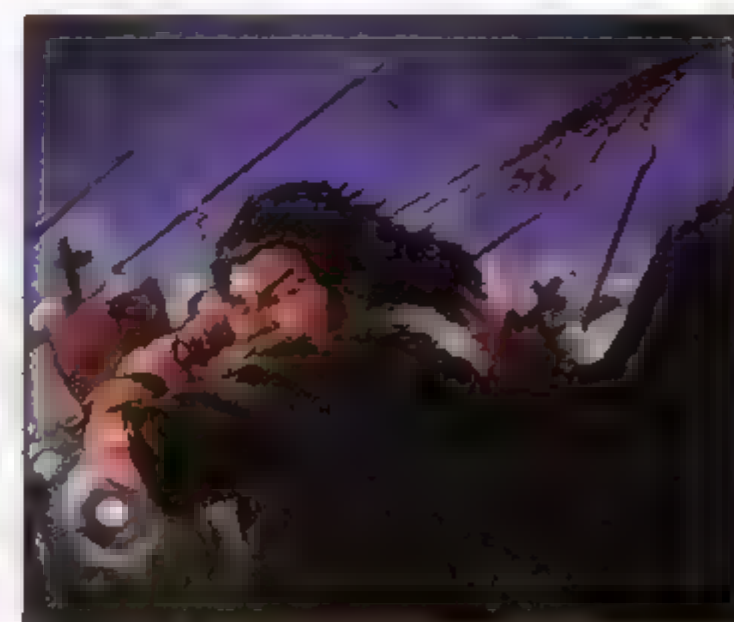
EndGame
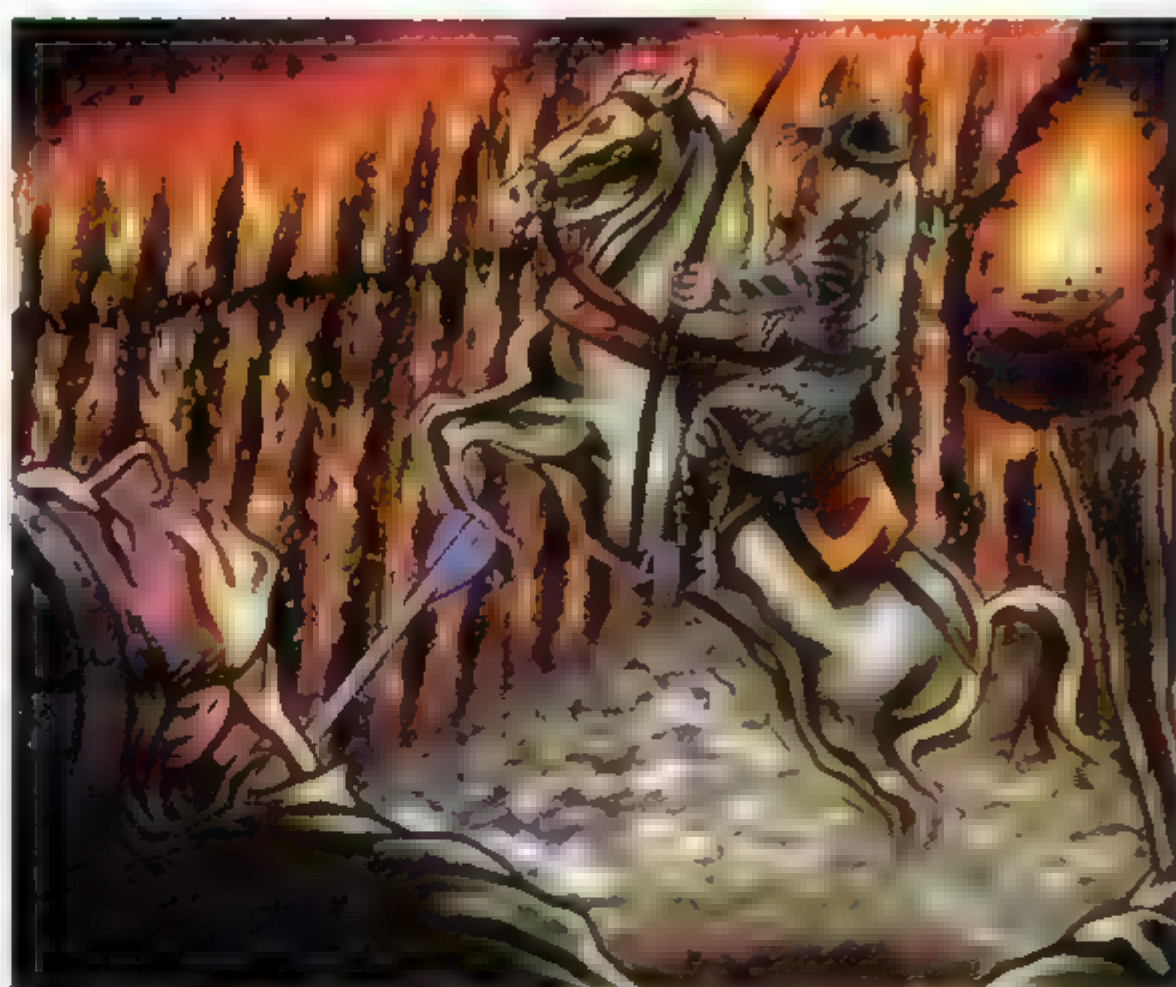
Example B.

Example C.

Example D

Example E

Hopefully I shed some light on the various levels of the creation process for both digital and traditional gaming card illustration. I found there never is one right way to accomplish any particular assignment, especially in such imaginative fields as comic book or role-playing game illustration. In fact, the more tools and techniques you learn, the more options and chances for creativity will present themselves to you. The paintbrush, or even the computer, is basically just another artist tool like the pencil. With a little patience and training with these tools, you'll find yourself ready to conquer any medium or subject matter like a true warrior.

Whether you found yourself here by accident or you're actually reading this because you enjoyed my articles in previous issues of Sketch, I'm glad you came along for the ride. Feel free to keep the fan mail coming, by the way, since a little encouragement inspires us Sketch creators to keep coming back each issue and delivering the goods for you on a timely basis. See you next ish!

So did Joe complete the wayward freelance of White Wolf and Age of Empires for his art directors. And having no further concern, he and his portfolio sought adventure in the East. Many assignments and deadlines did Joe fight. Honor and fear were heaped upon his name. In time he became a creator by his own hand... but that is another story.

P.S. By the way, congrats to Wes at ruffwesley@hotmail.com for winning my contest in issue #5! Though no one who emailed me actually knew all the answers, Wes came the closest in correctly guessing the twelve movies and/or songs I made reference to in the headers of my White Wolf cover illustration article.

Wes, check your mailbox soon, since you'll be getting from me some original published WhiteWolf art along with a stack of autographed prints of my WhiteWolf artwork. For those of you keeping score, the following are the headers from the article in issue #5 with the appropriate answers...

1. Leave the children at home... (The Conqueror Worm - cool Vincent Price horror flick)

2. Be afraid, be very afraid (The Fly - Jeff Goldblum version)

3. Bad Moon on the Rise (Credence Clearwater Revival)

4. Stare into these eyes... (Black Sunday - Barbara Steele...yummy!)

5. In my studio, no one can hear you scream (Alien - classic, (enuff said)

6. Blur the watercolor (White Zombie - one of the best bands of all time!)

7. Paint evil with evil (Pitch Black - one of the best and underrated movies of 2000)

8. Mask of the red death (Masque of the Red Death)

9. Dodge and burn an "X" in your head (White Zombie)

10. A domain of evil it is (The Empire Strikes Back - do you have to ask?)

11. The caves have eyes (The Hills Have Eyes)

12. The final conflict (The Final Conflict - Omen 3)

Thanks to everyone who emailed me, since I really had a blast coming up with these tie-ins for my horror themed article. Since this was fun and turned out successfully, you can possibly look forward to more contests in my future articles for Sketch. Just let me know what you think of my zaniness. Hey, if we can't teach you how to draw, Sketch can at least make you a winner like the Wes-meister!

To view more of Joe's trading card art along with the rest of his portfolio, be sure to check out his brand new official website at www.joecorroney.com.

Joe Corroney is the penciler and co-writer for the upcoming Blood and Roses Time Lords one-shot comic book from Sacred Studios. Currently he's creating more official Star Wars art for Lucasfilm and Wizards of the Coast on their new Star Wars role-playing game, and teaching Comic Book Illustration and Electronic Illustration at the Columbus College of Art and Design. In his spare time he endures the Wheel of Pain, while pondering the Riddle of Steel.

Finished Card Artwork

Portfolio Noogie
or
Shirt, Shoes, and Effort Required

What are you doing – what are you writing lately? What have you drawn? Colored? What ideas have you come up with? And how did you set any of it down? Have you looked at it since? While I sit and ponder the merits of a Scooby Doo movie directed by Paul Verhoeven (now there's entertainment), hopefully you're doing something far more creative, constructive, and beneficial for your career.

Some of you older artists might remember some of the "how to" books from the ancient days of the '60's (!). Then there was no web (again, "!"), no Kubert School, and no Sketch Magazine. Even in those heady days of youth and excitement, before completing your "Tippy the Turtle" masterpiece and submitting it to the famous "Art Instruction Schools" in order to be launched as a successful illustrator, you knew you had to practice – at least a little bit. If you were interested in learning how to draw comics, or enter a far more respectable drafting or advertising career, these books were often one of the only introductory learning avenues available to many. They varied in format and attractiveness; some of which would be pretty oddball by today's standards, but their instruction was generally broken down into something like this:

1. Start your drawing with a simple shape.

2. Block in more forms.

3. Fill in the details.

4. Complete your drawing.

And there you have it! Fast and easy, eh? Oh sure, you could pick up important tips like "Pencil lightly. This will help you to avoid heavy erasing in a later stage of your drawing," or "Draw your left line first. If you are left handed, draw the right line first."

You could search these "how-to's" out, in those pre-mall and pre-Amazon days, in bookstores or the home depot of the time, "Uncle Joe's Woodshed". In retrospect I wonder what I missed by getting only the Drawing for Boys volume in those less complex and less pretentious, pre-politically correct times; just what was in Drawing for Girls anyhow? All these books and manuals were fairly straightforward, somewhat unfriendly, and in between their no-nonsense and sometimes simplistic instruction stressed something that certainly hasn't changed over the years: Practice, practice, and more practice – known in certain circles as "hard work". And perhaps those topics deserve a book all their own.

If that book becomes available it's one many aspiring comic creators should definitely invest in, as it seems those particular components for success are the few many budding creators are missing. Among the most obviously basic and necessary elements, they can't be purchased, traded or downloaded. And although it can be argued that there is plenty of favoritism in the industry, there are few families of privilege to hand over choice assignments or plum positions. If you *want* work, be prepared *to* work.

This month's cover story, Chuck Dixon has secured himself a place in the Batman universe and comics history. He hasn't worked on a flagship character for a major publisher over an extended period time – as well as a vast variety of other product – by buying Bruce Wayne a round at Moe's after the Batmobile's OnStar system went down outside of Shelbyville. He did it through talent, perseverance, and unbelievable amounts of hard work and sacrifice. You might find that unsatisfying in its lack of nuance, but it's that simple. Dixon is a success story predicated on work and ideas. A good comic should also have heart and soul; the body of Dixon's work has that in abundance as well, placed there by uncountable hours of effort. He is obviously just one example, read our interviews with Bendis or Bill Tucci for more pros that worked hard for their position.

We at Sketch are seeing and hearing from any

number of disgruntled and frustrated creators. Some are cursingly, portfolio-punching angry with editors or pros that "misjudged them" or didn't "give them a chance." Others are so depressed and disillusioned at some of their initial rejections they say they're putting down their laptops and pencils, and giving up comics as a hobby.

Well...we'll be sorry to see you go.

We hate to loose anyone from the field. But all we can say is that hard work and diligence is a necessity of making it in the comic book market. And I think you'll find the same thing holds true in any commercial print field you want to enter. Before showing or submitting your samples, sit back, take a breath, and take a serious look at your work. Perseverance is important, but if you don't take other's opinions or criticism well, you might want to spare yourself some initial choppy waves you could easily cut through later. Whether writing or penciling, consider your actual story telling sensibilities. How does it look? Do you have a direction for it? Are you able to build on whatever you're doing?

Aping the latest hot artist or jumping on the current writing trend is not going to give you legs, even on the chance it gets you through the door. The market is notoriously narrow, and the opportunity for employment is as fraught with difficulty as it is rewarding in its paucity. As the '90's have demonstrated, sheer imitation is no longer a certain path to securing work. Are you inspired by one of those beautiful and eye grabbing but overly rendered art styles? Have you looked beneath the ornate linework to see what – if anything – makes that style work? If you're writing, are you learning how to deal with material of an episodic nature? Quality stories still rely on things like a beginning, middle, and end, not just snappy one-liners or a "big event." Are you adopting a retro look or animated style? Don't do so without understanding storytelling fundamentals and how your style of choice works within that framework, otherwise your attempts could go poorly beyond a splash page or pin-up – ever wonder why submission editors insist on seeing continuity samples? And if you're computer imaging or coloring, chances are good you're laying out some substantial dollars – make sure you're studying (or at least thinking about) color and its use, especially when applied to the comics medium –it takes more than just knowing how to work a magic wand to compete with the likes of some of the gifted and hard working computer wizards making some of the

current product so incredible. I'd love a full set of Copic Markers (reviewed this ish, and available from Blue Line Pro), but the considerable investment won't get me the color sense of Bruce Timm or the amazing anatomical knowledge and rendering ability of Tanino Liberatore, two indisputable modern masters of marker use (an art in and of itself).

Many aspiring creators, through misguided enthusiasm, lack of information, or simple tunnel vision are not analyzing their own talents or their target market – a sure trip to frustration and probable failure. Style over substance rarely holds, and all the best and latest tools, brush or Photoshop, won't help much without honest evaluation and the work that follows. You've seen it happen in the much larger fields of TV and movies; emphasis on incredible new technology and the techniques it enables taking precedence over interesting characters or coherent story telling. You may stay in your seat for one movie for a number of reasons, but you won't buy the comic that abuses your entertainment wants the next issue, let alone month after month. You expect effort to be put into your entertainment, get ready to put plenty of work into it yourself.

You can do it. And it will be worth it.

"People ask for criticism, but they only want praise," said Maugham. Of course, he also said that "To write simply is as difficult as to be good," and I need work on that. But if you're lucky enough to be able to get constructive criticism from a qualified comic pro, especially in a face-to-face meeting at a show or con, you're lucky. It will help you build and grow, just prepare to push yourself to your next level. Use all the instruction available and experiment with all the tools you can, combined with your enjoyment of the field. Then start practicing poses for your Top 10 photo.

As always, we've brought you another informative and diverse gaggle of articles to aid you in furthering your comic book enjoyment and involvement. Grab your medium of choice, and explore your talent and your market.

I wish you well. Keep dreaming and working. And most of all, keep enjoying what you do...

and keep Sketching.

Flint
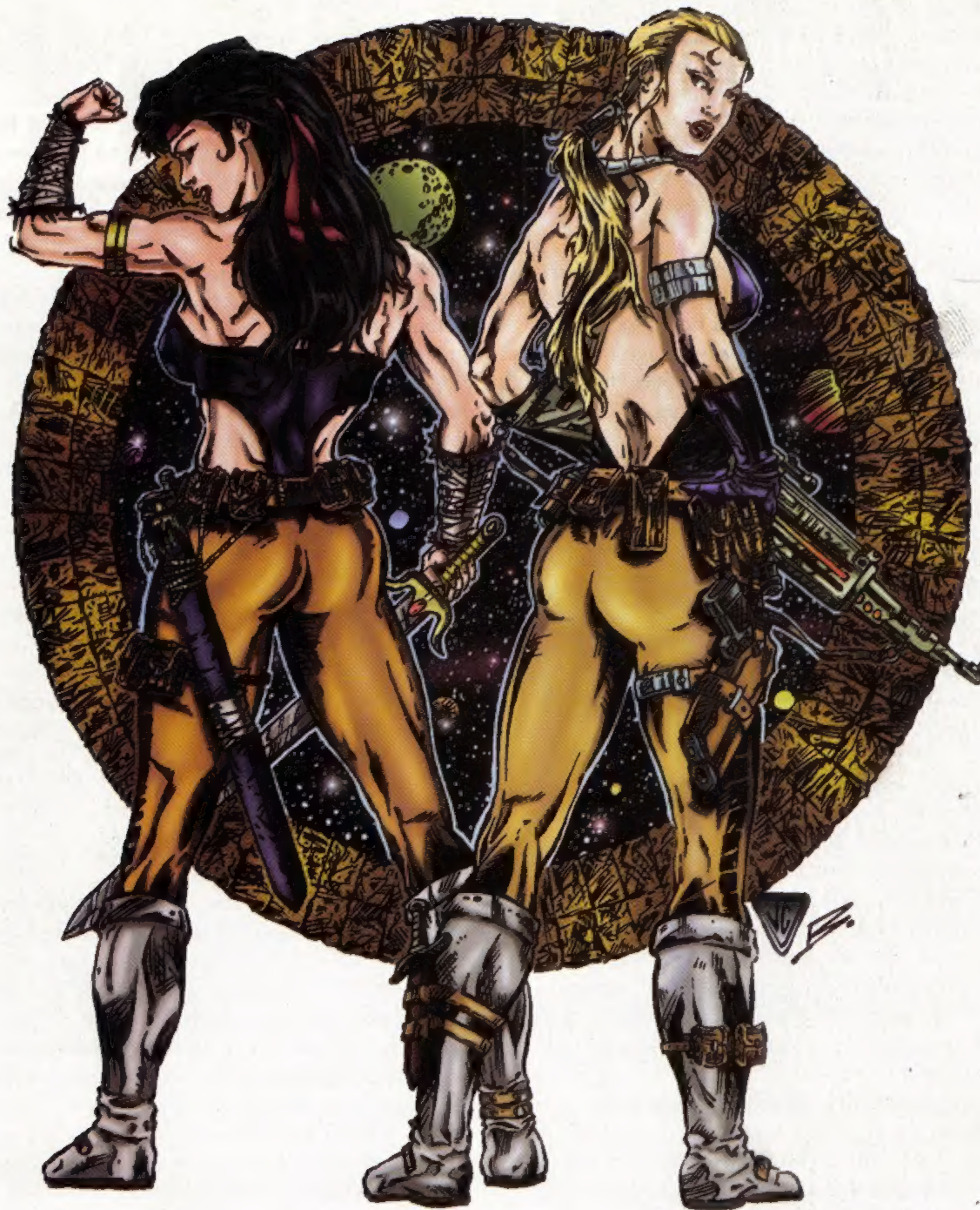
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